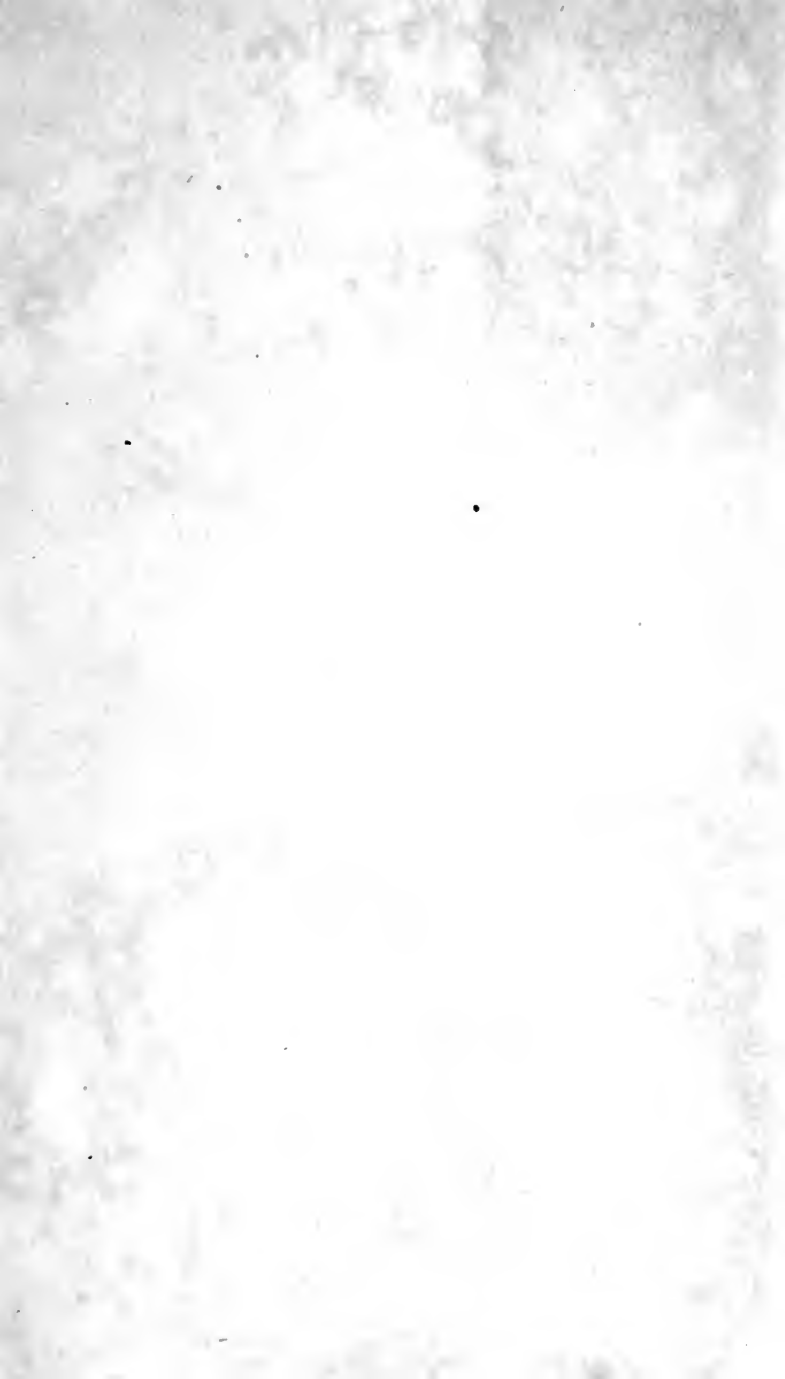


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[By Julia Rattray Waddington]

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JANET

OR

GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.

THE SECOND OF
A SERIES OF TALES ON THE PASSIONS:

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MISREPRESENTATION."

———And had she then no virtues,
Was she not wise, and chaste, and true?

———Oh no; envy had tainted all:
Like the foul worm that crawls and leaves it soil and noisomeness,
Marring the wholesome fruit.

OLD PLAY.

All Tales should have a moral. A Tale without a moral is just as useless as an
unroofed house—a bankrupt's bond—an M. P.'s conscience—or a fine lady.
M.S.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET

1839

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TO

THE LADY HENNIKER

THESE VOLUMES

ARE

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

WITH THE

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

OF

THE AUTHOR.

Gen. sec. Ray. 1176, 51 Edwards = 30.



PREFACE.

IN offering to the public eye the second Tale of a series I hope one day to see complete, I find myself impelled to say a word or two respecting its forerunner. For I would fain avow my heartfelt gratitude for all the favour and all the kindness it was that work's fortune to experience.

“Misrepresentation” was put on its ordeal under circumstances of a very adverse nature: the first production of a pen hitherto untried — entirely without

support and interest in those quarters where interest is most effectual—appearing at a moment when the market literally overflowed with works of fiction—there seemed but slender ground to hope it would escape the almost universal doom of writings thus unfavourably launched.

But a fairer destiny awaited it: the public shewed indulgence—the book made its way; and nothing now remains for me but to express my thankfulness, together with the hope that my present undertaking may meet as lenient judges as did my last.

Bath, January, 1839.

JANET;

OR

GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.



CHAPTER I.

SOME five or six and twenty years ago, the newspapers informed the world at large, and their acquaintance in particular, that Captain Berrington, of the Rifle Brigade, had led to the hymeneal altar, Eliza, relict of the late John Irving, Esq., and sister to Sir William Kingsbury, Bart., of Merton Lodge ——— shire.

VOL. I.

B

The friends of neither party received the intelligence with satisfaction : on the contrary, as the lady had a daughter on whom the greater portion of her very moderate fortune was settled—the gentleman, nothing but his commission, the marriage was universally considered highly imprudent. Mrs. Berrington's family, indeed, viewed the connection with so little pleasure that, from the period of its commencement, all intercourse between her and her nearest relatives was suspended. But this gave little annoyance to the offenders ; Captain Berrington, an easy, good-tempered man, seldom ruffled, never thoroughly discomposed, saw no cause for sorrow in being thus spared the mortification of occasional association with connections, whose position in society was greatly superior to his own ; while his lady, pretty, lively and young, found the constant change and gaiety of her present life so animating and agreeable, that

she was far from regretting her marriage or its consequences. The Berringtons were mutually attached, and would have been exceedingly happy had they been less restricted in their means ; for, in spite of many good resolutions, and an occasional act of self-denial, the close of each succeeding year found them with an increase of debt, and diminution of income.

At length, it became obvious some decisive measure must be adopted to ward off the impending ruin, and, after much deliberation and many an anxious thought, Captain Berrington fixed upon a plan that he hoped might answer the desired end, but which, while it involved the pain of separation, eventually led to no beneficial result. He exchanged into a regiment lately ordered on foreign service, and his lady established herself and her two daughters in a pretty small house at a well-frequented watering place.

The hope of rapid promotion had been his inducement; hers was, of course, economy; for she had heard that, at watering-places, people might live for nothing. But the event did not justify this expectation; on the contrary, thoughtless, inexperienced, and fond of amusement, her expenditure doubled, almost trebled, the allotted sum. Captain Berrington was scarcely more fortunate in his speculations: he did indeed gain a step in his profession, but, rendered incapable of further service by an attack of Ophthalmia, he returned home invalided, to find his wife as pretty and affectionate as ever—his little girl grown almost out of his remembrance—and his creditors clamorous.

The last mentioned troublesome gentry were pacified by the sacrifice of a most opportune legacy from a distant relative of Major Berrington's, a Mr. Thurlow. But this friendly bequest, although it came at so à propos a mo-

ment, proved in the end no advantage to the Berringtons. The temporary relief, thus afforded, appeared to give additional stimulus to the extravagance of this thoughtless couple; once, they had been brought out of difficulties by an unexpected turn of affairs, and, henceforth, vague hopes of similar good fortune were never wanting, to induce them to set prudence at defiance, and afford a decent excuse for fresh expenditure. But hope was always a deceiver (why is she painted as a woman?) Time passed on, relations of all sorts, near and distant, died, and no one followed Mr. Thurlow's praise-worthy example. If the Berringtons had been already wealthy they would have had legacies of ten, and twenty, and perhaps fifty, thousand pounds, for gold has an affinity to gold; but, as they did not belong to that favoured portion of the community, they had nothing but mourning rings, and not always those.

How all this would have ended it is impossible to say ; most probably in utter ruin. The death, however, of his wife, served Major Berrington the two-fold purpose, of lessening his expenses and fully opening his eyes to the exceeding folly, or rather sinfulness, of his conduct, and once more he began seriously to endeavour the retrieval of his affairs. It appeared an almost hopeless task, and a less phlegmatic disposition would, perhaps, have sunk beneath the combined trials of ill-health, bereavement and poverty. But, although he had been tenderly attached to his late wife, and, strictly speaking, never entirely recovered her loss, Major Berrington was not a distracted mourner ; in fact, the same buoyancy of temper that had contributed so materially to his embarrassments, now enabled him to support his affliction with greater apparent fortitude, than might, perhaps, have been evinced by a man of more real

strength of character, but less pliability of mind. How often do we give people credit for extraordinary patience and resignation when, in reality, their submission proceeds from constitutional apathy; they submit, because they have not energy to struggle—they are cheerful under affliction, because they either cannot, or will not, fully realize their loss.

CHAPTER II.

MAJOR Berrington's first care on the death of his wife, was to transmit her dying message of kind feeling to her brother, Sir William Kingsbury ; and, in reply, he received a proposal from the Baronet, to take charge of Janet Irving, Mrs. Berrington's daughter by her first marriage. The Major, who had been left sole guardian of the child, at first hesitated in agreeing to this offer ; he questioned Janet's finding a happy home amongst persons who had, hitherto, seemed to take so little interest in her. The

separation of the children, also, appeared objectionable ; but the Kingsburys were wealthy, they were likewise her nearest relatives, and, as they expressed an intention of befriending her, he did not feel himself justified in declining the overture. Having, therefore, exacted a promise that the sisters should meet occasionally, (how, was not settled) he delivered Janet over to her newly found relations, and then turned his whole attention to the arrangement of his affairs.

The sale of his commission might have proved the easiest and quickest mode of proceeding ; but, ever sanguine, Major Berrington still hoped he might sufficiently recover his eyesight, to admit of his engaging once more in active service ; he, therefore, set apart a portion of his income for the purpose of liquidating his debts, and resolved to live, and educate his daughter, on the mere pittance that remained. The first essay was made, by taking lodgings

in an obscure street in the county town, and, certainly, as far as economy was concerned, the plan answered well enough; but the child drooped; accustomed to the fresh air and freedom of the sea-side, she could not brook the confinement of a town; and, as they sat together in their little parlour, it was indeed a melancholy sight to watch her anxious father, himself, infirm and broken down, seeking to amuse and pacify, the restless, irritable child.

Ere very long, however, this tedious mode of life was exchanged for one better in unison with Major Berrington's taste, and less injurious to his daughter's health and disposition. One day, in glancing his eye over the county newspaper, his attention was caught by the following advertisement:—

DESIRABLE COUNTRY RESIDENCE.

To be let, and entered upon immediately, that most eligible cottage residence, charmingly situated in the delightful village of Atherley, and known as the Grange. It comprises dining and drawing-rooms,

study, five bed-rooms with dressing-rooms. Kitchen, servant's offices, coach-house, and stabling, with an abundant supply of water. This house, in every way suited for a small family, stands in about three acres of garden ground, and would be found worthy the attention of any gentleman wishing for a quiet residence in a genteel neighbourhood. N.B. To an eligible tenant, the above premises would be let on remarkably low terms.—Apply at Messrs. Stone, Solicitors, Brackwood. If by letter, post paid.

In addition to the low rent and country residence, there was a circumstance that rendered this notice particularly interesting to Major Berrington. A cousin of his, who had married the Rector of Atherley, since the death of her husband, still resided there, and as Mrs. Arnold was an excellent person, entirely devoted to her family, she would, he trusted, extend her maternal care to his own motherless child. No time, therefore, was lost in making the necessary application; and the result was considered satisfactory by one who had, in truth, but little pretention to fastidiousness.

Although dignified with the name of the “Grange,” the place in question was nothing

more than an old-fashioned farm-house, occupied for many years by a sort of half gentlewoman, who was lately dead, and whose son now wished to let the place. He was not, however, inclined to put the premises into anything like order, and, willing to let them for a mere trifle to any person, who, requiring no improvements, did not object to dirty paint and white-washed walls; and who would undertake to keep up the garden in its present state: for this had been the old lady's hobby, and, from respect to her memory, her son wished it to remain unchanged. Now, as it happened that the house, in addition to being old-fashioned, was objected to, as exceedingly inconvenient by some people, and the expense of keeping in order three acres of flower-garden frightened others, notwithstanding the very moderate rent, and the extreme beauty of the situation, no one was willing to become the tenant. Major Berrington's offer

of taking the Grange for a term of years, at an even lower rate than had been originally asked, was, therefore, gladly acceded to, and he thought himself fortunate in the transaction. To him, the prospect of keeping up the garden was far from formidable : for if Major Berrington had a passion for anything, it was for flowers ; and now, cut off from his former occupations and associates, unable from his defective eye-sight to employ himself in study, he looked forward to his garden as a constant source of delightful amusement.

And such it proved—years passed away, and left their footsteps on the Grange and its inhabitants. The house became more dilapidated, Major Berrington more bent and feeble ; but the garden flourished—it had become a world, a perfect world, of sweets and beauty—still, amidst all the plants of loveliness, which grew beneath his fostering care, none might compete

with Georgina, his fairy child. Fairy is not, perhaps, quite the term I should have used in speaking of Georgina Berrington, unless, indeed, eyes that for ever beamed forth joy and happiness, a smile bright as a summer's day, and a voice whose sprightly accents vied with the rising lark's gay carol, might give her claim to such a comparison.

Since her removal from S —, Georgina's existence had indeed realised all that we image to our minds when we talk of happy childhood. Too young to enter into her father's anxieties, or to feel the loss of a mother she had already forgotten, she knew no draw-back to her felicity; her sky was cloudless, her path without a thorn. There was nothing to break the spirits, or lessen the gaiety, natural to her age; to unkindness in its remotest form she was a stranger. Even the restraints of education were unknown to her: for Major Berrington, although he loved

his daughter tenderly, with his usual supineness of disposition, shrunk from the troublesome task of imparting to a volatile child, that instruction he was too poor to purchase ; and Mrs. Arnold, whose good sense might, perhaps, have suggested the propriety of adopting some plan more in accordance with the usual mode of bringing up young ladies, unfortunately died, shortly after Major Berrington settled at the Grange. It is true, Mrs. Arnold's place in her family was taken by an unmarried sister ; but this lady found quite enough to do in managing five girls and one boy, without troubling her head about Georgina ; who, meanwhile, grew a very lovely and sweet-tempered, but, of course, ignorant, girl.

Dear she was, however, to all around ; the aged loved the sunny smile and buoyant footsteps, which recalled so gracefully what they themselves had, ere-while, been—and the young

loved her, for, though she wanted energy to *lead*, she was ever ready to follow, in the wildest frolic or the liveliest game. Maurice, too, Maurice Arnold, who, in all their rambles, held Georgina's hand, who lifted her so carefully over each stile and brook, who filled her hat with clustering nuts, or rosy apples, would softly kiss her glowing cheek, and wish his sisters had been more like her. And from this atmosphere of love, Georgina's disposition took its hue ; kindness, affection beamed around her, and tenderness became the main-spring of her being, the all-pervading tincture of her mind : to be beloved, had been her destiny ; to love, became her nature.

CHAPTER III.

ON the afternoon of one of those cold, biting December days, which occur during what is commonly, and very justly, called a black frost, two female figures were seen traversing the village of Atherley, in the direction of the Grange. The one, a bulky-looking person of about five-and-forty, attired in a dark brown cloth pelisse, tight and scanty, and, therefore, shewing to advantage the full proportions of her portly form; yawning black cloth boots,

and a straw bonnet, lined and trimmed with coquelicot. Her age, as I have said, might have been forty-five, but she had neither wrinkles nor grey hairs ; and, although the meanness of her apparel did not proclaim a flourishing state of finance, there was something in the *tout ensemble* that looked as if the world had not gone ill with her ; something, too, in the firm, determined manner in which she planted her ample foot upon the hard and ringing ground, which gave assurance strong, that it would require more than a trifle to knock her down, either morally or physically. In disposition, she was evidently a bustling, good - tempered, sturdy - minded person, who would make a fair resistance against all the evils of life. As for her condition, she might be the house-keeper from Sir Felix Wrigton's, or a half-gentlewoman, or the wife or widow of a better sort of tradesman.

Her companion presented a complete contrast to this buxom individual. A faded plaid cloak hung in loose folds about her spare, small figure ; whilst a close bonnet, fastened under the chin with a sad-coloured ribbon, formed a fit frame-work to a set of features where the sharp red nose, pale cheeks, and melancholy mouth were ill-atoned for by an intellectual brow and piercing dark grey eye. She was clearly a would-be lady, and an old maid—in fact, Rebecca Rocket and Theresa Flagge, the two females who walked together in the direction of the Grange, on that cold, wintry afternoon, were both old maids. The first, the useful female already mentioned as presiding over the family of her deceased sister ; the latter, a recent addition to the society at Atherley. Theresa had, until lately, resided with a brother ; but, on his marriage, had found it expedient to transfer herself and chattels to

furnished apartments let by Mrs. Slopewell, Milliner, Mantua-maker, &c. The lodging consisted of a drawing-room, fourteen feet by twelve, and a closet, in which, by a good deal of management, a bed, chest of drawers, and chair, might be accommodated. The front room looked out upon the road, and faced the Bell Inn ; from the back, the admirers of fair prospects and sweet sounds and fragrant perfumes found each sense gratified by the close vicinity of a kitchen-garden, bounded by Farmer Stubley's farm-yard. Fifteen shillings a week was the rent charged, and that only as a favour to an old friend and customer ; the apartments being, according to Mrs. Slopewell, " so very pleasant and airy—town and country, all at once."

Theresa was a well-meaning person, who, had she not been poor, would never have been thought ridiculous ; she believed she did good

by writing moral and religious books, which, being handsomely bound and adorned with an attractive frontispiece, were intended as presents for young ladies. Some persons, it is true, averred that, but for the addition thus afforded to her very narrow income, Miss Flagge would have been less anxious for the improvement of her fellow-creatures ; whilst others remarked she must be either exceedingly conceited or censorious, or she would hardly have ventured so to criticise all the world ; and all agreed in thinking, that had she taken as much pains in detecting the beam in her own eye as she was wont to do in pointing out the motes of other people—Theresa would have been a more valuable member of society. Then, as there was a dash of sentiment about her, not altogether confined to the productions of her pen, there were not wanting those who said she would be nothing loth to change her

name and state. Perhaps they were not wrong, for she was poor, and *Flagge* is not euphonious.

With Rebecca it was widely different ; she gloried in her *singularity*, and would not have changed it for the world, married life being, in her estimation, a very nauseous draught indeed, a vile compound of all that is bitter and detestable. An opinion that the bare suspicion of an impending marriage never failed to call forth, and which Theresa usually combated with much earnestness. Such had been the case on the day in question, when the report of a projected alliance between the proprietor of the only grocer's shop in Atherley with a young person from a neighbouring town had formed a topic of discourse.

“ Well, well,” said Rebecca, at length, “ I hold to my old opinion, whoever marries makes a great mistake ; for, if the marriage is a happy one, one or other of the parties is almost always

sure to die ; and, if people do not agree, why, I suppose even you, Miss Flagge, will own they had better have remained single. No, no ; no marrying ; no cat and dog life for me !”

“ Ah,” said Theresa, “ but woman wants protection ; the weakness of her nature renders her unfit to combat those stronger than herself, and she is trampled on.”

“ Pshaw !” interrupted Miss Rocket, “ pshaw ! I say ; a woman’s head is as good as a man’s, any day, and her tongue something better ; so let her stand up for herself, Miss Flagge, and she ’ll have no more occasion for a husband to protect her than a fish has of a cork jacket to save it from being drowned.”

They now reached the Grange, when Rebecca, throwing back the wicket, passed quickly along the little gravel-walk, lifted the latch of the house-door, and, entirely disregarding an expostulatory pull from her companion, entered

unannounced the room where Major Berrington was sitting.

“ Well, Major,” she said, dropping herself into an arm-chair, and taking off a tippet formed of the fur of some nondescript animal, “ well, my dear Major, we are come to wish you joy. So old Sir William has taken himself off, at last ?”

“ Yes,” said Major Berrington, in a serious tone, “ Sir William has received his summons.”

“ And left your daughter, our dear Georgina, a legacy of five hundred pounds. Very handsome, indeed.”

“ Sir William has left my daughter a bequest of the sum you mention, and to Janet, he has bequeathed as many thousands,” replied Major Berrington, with some acrimony ; for he felt this unjust distinction between two equally near relations.

“ Hem !” said Rebecca. “ That is not quite fair, I think.”

“ Indeed,” observed Theresa, “ it would appear very much the reverse. But we must avoid passing uncharitable censures ; these trials are often beneficial, and I doubt not our friend will display his wonted strength of mind on this painful occasion. ‘ Sweet are the uses of adversity.’ ”

“ Yes, yes, sweet enough, and bitter, too ; but you ’ll never persuade me, Miss Flagge, that Sir William has not acted very unfairly by Georgina ; it was my first opinion, and I maintain it still,” retorted Rocket.

“ Where is the charming girl ? ” enquired Theresa.

“ In the garden ; Mattocks, the sexton, came to beg for evergreens to decorate the church, and Georgina is gone with him to watch over and protect my favourites.”

“ Ah, there she is—lovely, interesting creature ! How gracefully she bounds along, like

some young startled fawn! Then, that Hebe countenance — that sparkling smile — ah, my much valued friend, what a treasure is such a child !”

Major Berrington smiled thoughtfully.— “Georgina is, indeed,” he said, “a source of much happiness, but, at the same time, one of great anxiety.”

“I ’ve often heard it remarked that *only* children are always objects of anxiety,” replied Theresa.

“Ah !” said Rebecca, “when people talk of one child giving more uneasiness than a great many, it is my opinion that they know nothing at all about the matter; and if such persons had to manage a family of five girls and a boy, as I have, I ’ll be bound they would very soon alter their tone.”

“What is Georgina’s exact age?” enquired Theresa, returning to the subject most likely to interest Major Berrington.

“Georgina was twelve years old on the eighth of last month.”

“Is it possible? Twelve years old! Really, I should hardly have imagined it.”

“Georgina looks her age, fully,” said the matter-of-fact Rebecca; “or, rather, from being tall and stout, she looks older; but that’s not of much importance. Provided a girl is strong and healthy, what matter how she looks?”

“Beauty,” replied Theresa, “is always prepossessing—a passport to kindly feelings. Besides, in forming that connexion on which so much of woman’s happiness depends, her personal loveliness is often of more weight than intellectual merit, or varied accomplishment.”

“Yes, yes,” observed Miss Rocket, “we all know how easily men are caught by a pretty face, and how soon they can forget it, too; in love with a woman one day, out of love the next: such, I hope, will never be Georgina’s fate.

However, your speaking of accomplishments and intellect reminds me of something that occurred to my mind the moment I heard of the legacy. Don't you think, Major, Georgina would be all the better for a little schooling? She is past twelve years old, really too big to spend all her time romping about as she does. I declare, at this very moment, she is bowling little Bob Mattocks's hoop. Georgina, Georgina," she continued, tapping at the window, "Georgina, do remember that you are a young lady, not a great school-boy! Really, Major, it is time to break her of these tom-boy habits."

But Rebecca tapped in vain; Georgina did not, or would not, hear.

"Well," said Miss Rocket, returning to her seat, "I suppose we must not expect old heads on young shoulders. But, indeed, although, I am no advocate for making blue stockings of

girls (I mean nothing personal, Miss Flagge), although, I say, I am no advocate for making a blue stocking of a girl, still, I do think to have her grow up in utter ignorance is a mistake the other way. Now, Major, this legacy seems to be come on purpose that you may give Georgina a proper sensible education. One hundred pounds would do the thing handsomely, for, you know, Miss Braceback's charges, including extras, never exceed thirty pounds a year; and when Georgina has been three years under her care she will be quite an altered creature. You know what she has done for my nieces. I fear you don't like the idea of parting with your daughter," pursued the voluble Miss Rocket, observing that Major Berrington hesitated in his reply. "All natural, all very natural: still, as a parent, you must surely see it is your duty to sacrifice your wishes to Georgina's welfare. After all, the time will pass quickly enough:

and you may depend upon my nieces and myself to keep you from feeling dull. Miss Flagge, too," (with rather a sly glance) "will, I have no doubt, be all that is kind and' neighbourly ; so you had better let me mention your intention to Miss Braceback, when I settle her account. And, by the way, now I think of it, as there will be three girls out of the same family, so to speak, she really ought to take them, one with another, for five-and-twenty pounds apiece. I shall certainly suggest it."

"If," answered Major Berrington, "I should decide on sending Georgina from home, I hardly think I should place her under Miss Braceback's care."

"Why not ? Where could you meet with a better school for the money ? I am sure the improvement Susan has made in the last six months is quite astonishing."

"Major Berrington, probably, objects to public

education, altogether," said Theresa; "nor am I surprised. It is impossible the Mistress can attend to all the minutiae of character in so many young people so as to frame her instructions properly; the mixture is very objectionable; and, to preserve order in so large a family, it becomes imperative to establish a multitude of regulations, many of them trivial and apparently unnecessary; to evade which, becomes a constant endeavour with the pupils, who thus acquire habits of duplicity and artifice. In fact, you seldom meet with school-girls (I except your nieces, of course, Miss Rocket), you seldom, I say, meet with school-girls who are not greedy, vulgar and sly."

"Nothing is perfect," rejoined Rebecca, tartly, "if school-girls are what you say, I am sure there is little to be gained by home education: all young people, and old ones too, Miss Flagge, will bear improvement; children from school

may be vulgar and so on, but those who are brought up at home are just as apt to turn out conceited and selfish; how can it be otherwise, when they are made continually the first objects with both parents and governesses?"

"All children are selfish;" said Theresa.

"Not naturally, however;" replied Rebecca, who, although an old maid, was remarkably fond of children, and having herself been educated at a boarding-school thought it quite the thing; "children are not naturally selfish; they are made so by bad management. A child has no greater pleasure than to be useful; his little services are always readily given; he likes nothing so well as to be employed for others. It is true, children require encouragement, attention—but this proceeds from their constant sense of dependence."

Theresa was silent, but not convinced: she had a strong bias in favour of home education;

principally, I believe, in consequence of a half-formed resolution of undertaking the onerous duties of private tuition, should a situation, embracing every comfort and a large salary, present itself; for, independent of other advantages, she had observed that, somehow or other, the majority of governesses contrived to meet with suitable mates.

Rebecca paused for breath, then continued: "Besides, where do you meet with a governess in any way calculated for her situation, or who remains in it? Are not the governesses of the present day very much in the style of the servants, for ever leaving their places and flying about the world like stage coaches? Formerly, a governess remained for years in her situation and became almost one of the family; but now, she goes through nearly as many hands as a five pound note."

"May not the parents be to blame?" answer-

ed Theresa. "They expect to see their children become prodigies—are disappointed ; and quite forget the fault is just as likely to lie on one side as the other."

"In some instances, perhaps. But, if the remark held good in all, you would find parents as fastidious with regard to schools ; this, however, is not the case : for while you hear, perpetually, of a change of governesses (indeed I scarcely ever knew a girl educated at home who had not undergone a succession of them,) children brought up at school seldom make any change beyond that, perhaps, of being removed to a more expensive one, as they grow older and require finishing. Nor do I see how it can be otherwise ; for who are the persons who go out as instructors ? Generally speaking, the daughters of tradespeople, who, in consequence of having been educated at the very schools so much reprobated, imagine themselves capable

of undertaking the most arduous charge ; one too, for which, in nine cases out of ten, they are no more fit than a mouse is to draw a wheelbarrow. I don't mean to deny that some most exemplary and accomplished governesses may be met with ; but the majority of young persons, who thus employ themselves, have, I firmly believe, entirely mistaken their vocation."

"Still," remarked Theresa, "I must confess, I lean towards a home education ; why should so much depend upon the governess ? At least, where the number of children is not too great, may not the parent's eye be sufficient ?"

"Parents are proverbially blind," replied Rebecca.

"You take no part in this discussion," said Theresa, gently, to Major Berrington ; who, in despair of edging in a word, had fallen into a brown study.

“The argument has been so ably supported on both sides that, in truth, nothing remained for me but to sit by and listen,” he replied, with a gallant bow to both ladies.

“But, after all,” said Theresa, imagining, from the coldness with which he had met Rebecca’s proposal, that Major Berrington had no intention of profiting by her advice; “after all that can be said upon the subject, after weighing most carefully the respective merits of home or scholastic education, it must be confessed the evils and difficulties on both sides are immense; and that either is a disagreeable experiment, and perhaps, needless expense. Boys must be educated; but girls would probably be just as well, and happy, and useful, were the cultivation of the mind less attended to. Indeed, I think, we carry our notions of female acquirements and accomplishments quite beyond the mark; our mothers and grandmothers, compared to

the young ladies of the present day, would have appeared perfect ignoramuses; yet, they made excellent wives and mothers, and I question whether any of the all-accomplished modern young ladies would understand the management of a household half so well."

"You are no advocate for female Crichtons, I see, Miss Flagge;" observed Major Berrington.

"Far from it; so far, indeed, that I have been induced to bring the subject forward in a little work I am now preparing; and I hope to prove that both health and happiness are seriously injured by the present system of education."

"If," said Rebecca, "you mean to say we are to go back to the old one, and place our girls on the level of their great grandmothers, I beg to observe you will not have me on your side; for, notwithstanding the hue and cry that is raised against modern attainments, and although I believe the matter is sometimes carried

too far—I consider we have made both an improvement and an advance. What, I should like to know, were women fifty years ago? And how did they employ themselves? They wrote and read their own language (not always very grammatically); understood a few words of French—if the voice and ear were good, played and sung a little—those who lived in the country were mighty in the mysteries of pies and puddings, pickles and preserves: in towns, dress was the grand object of their thoughts, the business of their lives. They believed in dreams, and consulted fortune-tellers, swam minuets, flirted fans, curtsied gracefully, read *Tom Jones* and the *Sorrows of Werter*. Those who were industriously inclined worked tent-stitch; those who were not, paid visits and played cards. Now, in what respect were they better than the girls of the present day?”

“Very little, certainly, if your picture be not overdrawn,” said Major Berrington.

“But,” observed Miss Flagge, “in the cultivation of the head, do we not now sometimes overlook the heart? Our grandmothers were punctilious in the performance of all their duties, both social and religious; while the young people of our time are brought up to think of nothing beyond themselves and their accomplishments.”

“Well, well,” replied Rebecca, “there’s no use looking for perfection in this world; if we do, we shall only lose our time. We all know there’s good and bad in everything; so I hope, Major, you’ll think over what I’ve been saying about Miss Braceback: for, rely upon it, whatever might have been forty or fifty years ago, ignorance won’t do now.”

Major Berrington, again appealed to, found himself constrained to make some reply; but his answer rather accorded with his own previous train of thoughts than with the discus-

sion between the fair disputants. Georgina's education, he could not deny, had been very much neglected; still he would not consider this a subject of regret. We never like to own an error even where it has been in some measure involuntary.

"I have," he said, "a very great dislike, almost a dread, of premature education. Forced plants are always sickly, and infant prodigies seldom realise the expectations they have raised. Besides, by early cramming the brain with knowledge, you weigh down the imagination, and destroy all originality of mind. The constant habit of *teaching*, without which, early education will not go on, is also injurious; it prevents a spirit of enquiry, and, for want of exertion, the faculties become feeble: it is like carrying a child, instead of making him find out for himself the way to use his limbs. Assist a child to learn, but do not *teach* him every-

thing; let him teach himself, and, though he may be backward at twelve years old, he will not at twenty. If there be real talent, it will not require so much cultivation; and, if there be not, you are throwing away both time and trouble—your pupil will turn out a parrot, but nothing more.”

“Major, I perfectly agree with you,” remarked Miss Flagge. “With regard to a girl’s education, your observations are peculiarly judicious; for, in addition to all you have advanced, I question whether, after all the pains taken, time spent, the money lavished in acquiring accomplishments, girls are rendered at all more attractive. I really believe men are much more apt to dread, than admire, an accomplished woman.”

“That appears to me of very little importance,” answered Rebecca; “the fewer marriages the better, say I; and, if a girl isn’t to

be admired because she happens to have more than two ideas in her head, it is no great consequence. A woman, whose mind is well cultivated, and time properly employed, will care very little whether people fall in love with her or not. And that's one reason, Major, why I wish you would not let Georgina run wild in this sort of way. You will look foolish enough, if, some three or four years hence, she should come and tell you she is breaking her heart for her cousin Maurice, and then, to prove it, runs off to Gretna Green with him; provided, indeed, she doesn't break her leg in jumping out of the window."

Major Berrington looked half offended; and Theresa made a long speech about the impossibility that Georgina should ever thus requite her father's indulgence.

"Well, well," interrupted Rebecca, as she rose to depart, "the best way to prevent an

evil is to guard against it; so again I say, Major, think over my advice; if Georgina is busy at Miss Braceback's, learning whatever a young lady ought to learn, she 'll have no time for falling in love. Come, Miss Flagge, it's time for us to move."

It was observed that both Miss Rocket and Miss Flagge left the Grange with rather heightened complexions: Rebecca, not altogether pleased at the disrespect with which her counsels had been treated; Theresa, fluttered with the excitement of strengthened hope; for she firmly believed Major Berrington had been convinced by her arguments; she was, therefore, gaining an ascendancy over his mind. And they spent the remainder of the day, Rebecca, in lamenting the obtuseness of some people, especially of *men*: Theresa, meditating on the delightful effects of female influence, and the great benefit and advantage it had always

proved to the whole human race. No doubt Theresa also thought it possible, or more than possible, her's might, ere long, shew itself by its effects: that is to say, she began to hope the day was not far distant when the Grange and its inhabitants would own her sway.

Really, gentlemen should be cautious how they conduct themselves when thrown in contact with single ladies.

CHAPTER IV.

MAJOR BERRINGTON did think over Miss Rocket's suggestion; the result, however, of his cogitations was not a verdict in favour of Miss Braceback, but a letter to Janet, begging that the terms of the lady under whose care she then was might be forwarded to him; which was done without any considerable delay. The amount of Miss Maxwell's charges startled Major Berrington, and called forth a torrent of invectives against the absurdities of modern

education from Miss Flagge. Rebecca took the opposite side of the question ; as, indeed, was usual with her ; for, although these two ladies, from habit, or mutual convenience, were constantly together, and were even actually attached, they seldom or never agreed on any one subject.

“ It was true,” observed Rebecca, “ Miss Maxwell’s charge was high, very high ; more than three times as much as Miss Braceback’s, and double what Mrs. Price asked ; although Mrs. Price’s was decidedly a first-rate school, and patronised by some of the first families in the county. Sir John Hawkesley, for instance, after Lady Hawkesley’s death, sent his daughter to Mrs. Price ; and the Miss Trefoils, whose father had left fifty thousand pounds to each of his children, had been entirely educated by Mrs. Price. Still Mrs. Price’s was only country, while Miss Maxwell’s was town, education ; and, if peo-

ple want London goods, they must make up their mind to pay London prices. Very likely two years at Miss Maxwell's would do as much for Georgina, as four at either of the other schools. Besides, Lady Kingsbury had added a kind message, expressing her approbation of the plan, as well as readiness to receive Georgina during the holidays, in case the distance should render her return to Atherley, inconvenient; and it was very important she should know something of her mother's family."

Rebecca's eloquence proved more effectual on the present, than on the former, occasion; the latter reasoning, especially, was conclusive; and, towards the end of January, Major Berrington proceeded to London, deposited his daughter at Miss Maxwell's, consulted an eminent oculist concerning his failing eye-sight, and, finding there was not a shadow of hope of his again being equal to active service, disposed of his commission.

We must now say a few words of Janet Irving, whose lot had been a very different one from Georgina's. Notwithstanding the agreement stipulated by Major Berrington respecting an occasional meeting between the sisters, from a variety of trifling causes, the separation had hitherto remained unbroken; all affection, therefore, that Janet might have cherished for Georgina must have faded, even had her sentiments partaken of that deep and holy love sister should feel for sister. But, alas! they were of a widely different cast. Mrs. Berrington, weak and injudicious, had openly preferred her youngest daughter: young as she was, Janet observed the preference so foolishly displayed; and the seeds of jealousy, thus early sown, choked and destroyed all better feelings towards her little rival. Nor was the impression ever afterwards effaced: indeed, I believe, that the mind once tainted with envy, rarely recovers

a more healthy tone ; the stain is indelible ; the bias, impossible to change—all is thenceforth seen through a distorted medium, and judged according to false assumptions.

Neither the lapse of years, nor her early education, gave a more amiable complexion to Janet Irving's mind. She formed one of her uncle's family, but she was dependent ; she was an object of care, not love—of anxiety, not solicitude ; she resided at Merton Lodge, but not as the daughter of the house ; her wants were little heeded—her wishes still less ; in all things she was secondary to her cousin Marcus. Thus chilled by the absence of affection, Janet's disposition became clouded with discontent, wrapped up in selfishness ; and often, from the midst of her comparatively splendid home, would she envy Georgina's humbler, but far more happy, lot. She became deceitful, too, for the unloved child is seldom frank—the envious person ever

wears a mask—and mistrustful, for, in accordance with the old adage, she formed her estimate of others by herself.

In this manner were the characters of both sisters injured: Georgina, reared with an excess of tenderness, grew inert and weak; incapable of thinking, or acting for herself; an easy dupe—a ready tool—Janet, on the contrary, was full of energy; but it was all selfish; she felt herself an object of affection to no one living creature, and in return she cared for no one—lived but for herself.

Miss Irving's education had been sedulously attended to: she was placed at a popular school in the neighbourhood of London, and, during the vacation shared the instruction of her cousin's tutor; and, being naturally clever and fond of admiration, her progress in the multifarious branches of female education was rapid. She danced well, walked well, was a good musician,

spoke French fluently, knew a little Italian, a little German; and *professed* to understand astronomy, chemistry, natural philosophy, geology, mineralogy, conchology, botany, dress and mathematics.

Her plausible, insinuating manner rendered Janet a great favourite with her young companions; while the circumstance of her being the niece of Sir William Kingsbury, of Merton Lodge, secured the favourable opinion of the head of the establishment. But, although this species of popularity might gratify her vanity, it went no further: it could not touch her heart, nor call forth that general feeling of good will to others, which arises from the happy consciousness that we ourselves are objects of affection. And when she heard her school-fellows expatiating on the delights of their respective homes, the indulgence of their relatives, the pleasure their return would give to parents, sisters,

brothers—Janet bitterly remembered that, at Merton, her presence would be acquiesced in, not cherished ; and that all her amusements would depend on a capricious school-boy, whose every wish was gratified, even forestalled, while hers were neither asked nor thought of.

Such was Janet at the period when, after the lapse of many years, she found herself once more an inmate of the same household with her sister. It was a sad grief to poor Georgina, when she exchanged her life of happy idleness for the restraints and dull formalities of Miss Maxwell's establishment ; and found herself surrounded by strange companions, who looked down upon the country girl ; and fault-finding teachers, whose exclamations of surprise at her excessive ignorance were only varied by endeavours to stimulate her diligence : she, who had never learnt—had been but seldom blamed—whose existence had been hitherto so free and joyous.

But time brought a remedy to this, as he will do to every sorrow. Georgina's abilities were excellent, and great her diligence; for the length of time she was to remain from home depended upon the progress she should make. One advantage, too, in Miss Maxwell's eyes (it was no mean one) resulted from her former desultory mode of life; there was nothing to be unlearnt, no vicious system to be broken through; if the soil were uncultivated, still was it free from weeds. Her sweet temper and gaiety won the good-will of all, and when the Midsummer vacation came she was the favourite with every class—mistress, masters, and pupils. Janet was no longer the most popular girl in the establishment—Georgina had supplanted her; and thus materially increased her former unsisterly feelings.

The holidays, which, in accordance with Lady Kingsbury's proposal, Georgina spent at

Merton Lodge, rendered her a further object of jealousy. Lady Kingsbury did not, it is true, take so decided a fancy to her late husband's youngest niece as to afford grounds for apprehension that she might one day usurp her eldest sister's place; but Georgina passed her life far more agreeably than Janet: for, while the younger was allowed full liberty and spent her time in gardening, strolling about the grounds and riding donkeys with her cousin Marcus, the elder seldom obtained leave to quit the drawing-room: and as Miss Irving, who entertained no real sentiment of attachment towards Lady Kingsbury, found the confinement exceedingly irksome, she failed not to draw comparisons between herself and the more fortunate Georgina. But, beyond occasional slight attempts to disparage her rival, no evidence of jealousy betrayed itself; on the contrary, her manner evinced the most affectionate regard

which was tenderly reciprocated by the warm-hearted, totally unsuspecting girl.

Thus passed three years; when Miss Irving having entered her eighteenth, and Georgina completed her fifteenth year they left Miss Maxwell's establishment: Janet, to take her place in society as niece to Lady Kingsbury, to mingle in the world and try her chance of matrimony; Georgina, to return to her country home and innocent enjoyments. The parting was marked by tears on the one side, and expressions of regret on the other; by promises of frequent visits and letters.

Perhaps, for once, Miss Irving was not altogether insincere: she could not remain quite untouched by the affection of one whom it was no longer possible to envy, who could in no way, henceforth, clash with her; whose prospects were so inferior, who was for life condemned to the vulgarity of a remote country

village, with scarcely a chance of forming even a respectable connexion—while she, launched in the world of fashion and of gaiety—independent, beautiful, and accomplished—must speedily become the object of universal admiration, and, in all probability, would crown a succession of brilliant triumphs by a splendid alliance ; a Viscountess's coronet, at least, she thought, would one day glitter on her brow.

Janet's expectations, however, like the expectations of many other persons of her time of life, were not fulfilled. Although she was presented at Court, and although Lady Kingsbury, fond of gaiety, and glad of an excuse for entering into the world, gave balls and dinner-parties, patronised fancy fairs and morning concerts, promoted pic-nics, even went the length of taking half an opera-box—although Janet dressed expensively, was usually allowed to possess no moderate degree of beauty, and

imagined twice as wealthy as, in reality, she was; the favourite object of her hopes remained as far off as before. The season passed; no offer worthy of acceptance had been made; it was clear her expectations must be lowered; a Baronet should be the object of her choice, and, during the autumnal vacation, Sir Marcus underwent an exceedingly hot siege. But Sir Marcus was impregnable; he even carried his lack of gallantry so far as to observe, on more than one occasion, in Miss Irving's presence, "that, for his part, he was utterly at a loss to understand how any man could marry a first cousin; and that, if he ever did any-thing so foolish, Georgina Berrington should be the girl:" a declaration which sealed the fate of Georgina Berrington's promised visits to Merton Lodge.

She, meanwhile, was spending her time very much to her own satisfaction, and her father's comfort; but to the almost entire obliteration

of all she had acquired whilst under Miss Maxwell's tuition. It is true, Rebecca remonstrated, and Charlotte Arnold encouraged, and Maurice endeavoured, by presents of books and music, to allure her into more industrious habits. All was in vain; for a time, perhaps Georgina would shake off her desultory ways, and practise, read, and write, steadily enough; but the impression speedily wore off, and she became as idle as before. What was the use of spending hours at the piano, when her father preferred the full, rich tones of her melodious voice without even the simplest accompaniment? Besides, his increasing infirmity rendered her services so necessary, he could, she was sure, ill spare the time it would take to keep up her knowledge of French, or acquire that of Italian. People are seldom slow to find excuses for the indulgence of their favourite propensities; it would be well were all such pretexts as correct

and amiable as those Georgina pleaded in defence of hers.

At sixteen she was pronounced, by the few gentlemen who had an opportunity of seeing her, "an exceedingly fine girl." The ladies acknowledged she was pretty, very pretty; but regretted her appearance of robust health, and inclination to embonpoint.

"If it were not for her height," observed Mrs. Daymour, "Miss Berrington would certainly be too stout. As it is, I am sadly afraid she will grow coarse; and her complexion, although certainly very brilliant, is, in my opinion, almost too high. Don't you think, my dear Lady Wrighton, Miss Berrington has too much colour?"

"*She* does not think so, at any rate," replied Lady Wrighton, "or she would endeavour to break herself of that vulgar habit of blushing so continually."

“It is really to be lamented some one does not give her a few hints on the subject ;—nothing is more unbecoming than a perpetual rush of blood to the face—it almost infallibly leads to a red nose.”

“It is a great pity she has no mother !”

“Very great, indeed. I never suffer my daughters to blush, except on receiving an offer of marriage, and then, you know, a slight increase of colour is not only graceful, but unavoidable.”

“If Miss Berrington is to reserve her blushes for those occasions, her complexion stands in little danger ; ours is certainly not a marrying county.”

“No, indeed,” sighed Mrs. Daymour, who was blessed with five single daughters ; “and while so many beautiful und accomplished girls remain unmarried, I should think Miss Berrington, with her coarse hands and sunburnt

skin, will hardly find herself called upon."

"Do you know, mama," exclaimed Miss Daymour, "I should not be surprised if Georgina Berrington were to become quite the rage."

"I should," replied mama.

"Very likely she will carry off the palm, merely because she is so different from us all. She is just the style of beauty the gentlemen admire, besides being, it is said, good-tempered to a fault—another great perfection in their eyes."

"All fools are good-tempered," observed Mrs. Daymour.

"Georgina's eyes are not those of a fool."

"Her mouth is. I declare that eternal simper, or *smile*, I suppose she would call it, perfectly irritates my nerves."

"Because," rejoined the daughter, in a low tone, "it serves to shew a set of the whitest

teeth imaginable." Then, urged either by the spirit of contradiction to her mama, or rather, perhaps, by a feeling of pity towards an unoffending girl, Miss Daymour added, "I understand her voice in singing is very beautiful, and, to judge by a few notes I caught last Sunday—"

"My dear Sarah," interrupted Mrs. Daymour, "I am really sorry your thoughts are not better regulated. What is this young person's singing to you, may I enquire? Can you find no other occupation for your mind during church-time than listening to the coarse, loud tones of a girl like Miss Berrington?"

"When we were in town, mama, you rather encouraged my attending the Catholic chapel on account of the music, which would, you said, improve my taste, and perhaps save the necessity of my taking any more singing lessons."

“That is quite another question.”

“Is Miss Berrington’s singing really good?” enquired the hostess; “my uncle, Lord Lineageleigh, whom I expect to join our party this evening, is almost music mad; and, if I thought her singing worth listening to, I would ask her over for a day or two. It is true, I have not called there since the general election, but such people have no right to give themselves airs; she would, of course, be too happy to come and make herself useful. Is she worth hearing?”

“Indeed, I cannot say,” replied Mrs. Daymour; “but this I do know, that there is great danger in introducing such a person into a house where there are young men. These sort of half-bred girls are always deeply artful; and there is no saying where the mischief may end. I would not answer for Lord Lineageleigh himself.”

“Very true,” rejoined Lady Wrighton ; and the conversation dropped.

Unkind as were these criticisms, they were not altogether ill-founded. Georgina’s claim to beauty was precarious ; a few shades more of colour, a slight increase of embonpoint, and it was gone ; she would become clumsy, perhaps vulgar-looking. The timidity, also, which sent the blood rushing to her cheeks and forehead, rendered her movements in the presence of strangers, awkward and restrained ; while the smile that played so often round her lips cloyed from its very sweetness. But Georgina will not always smile ; her brow speaks thoughtfulness—her dark eyes, feeling ; and those who think and feel, in this bleak world, know more of tears than smiles.

CHAPTER V.

“PAPA!” exclaimed Georgina, when sauntering with her father in the garden, one lovely summer evening, “Papa, here is Maurice; and, looking so worn and fagged, he must surely have travelled all night.”

The next moment they were joined by a tall, slight young man, whose extreme delicacy of appearance was heightened, rather than otherwise, by the bright hectic colour which tinged his hollow cheeks.

“Maurice, my boy, I’m glad to see you back again,” said Major Berrington, warmly shaking the young man’s hand, whilst Georgina gazed anxiously and affectionately on his wasted countenance. “I’m glad to see you back again; only regret I cannot wish you joy. But don’t let this check damp your spirits; remember, there is a light and a dark side to every subject: the more frequently the ball is struck down, the higher will be the rebound at last.”

“Aye,” thought Maurice, with all the sickening hoplessness of disappointment, “if it be not struck down for ever.”

“And how came you to lose the situation, after all?” inquired Georgina.

“It had been promised long ago, to a protégé of Lord Lineageleigh’s, in return for some political service. I never even had a chance.”

“Well,” said the Major, “we can’t deny it’s a disappointment, a very great disappointment

you have met with, particularly as the climate might have suited you. But don't let your spirits droop ; it is something to feel you have not lost the place by any failing of your own."

"Thank you, my dear sir, for your expressions of kindness. I feel them much ; believe me, if any thing could blunt the edge of my mortification, it would be the certainty, or, at any rate, the hope, there are yet those who feel interested in a defeated candidate."

As he spoke, Maurice looked towards Georgina, who, for sole answer, placed her hand in his.

"You will take tea with us ?" enquired Major Berrington.

"Hardly. I have been travelling for the last four-and-twenty hours, and am, I fear, not quite the thing to join a lady's tea-table."

"Pooh, pooh. Georgina doesn't know how a man looks, nor what he has got on. Come

in, come in, make no apologies. You found all well at home, I know."

"I have not yet been there," rejoined Maurice, slightly reddening.

"Not been there! Why you must have passed the very door. But perhaps you know they have got a party, one of your aunt Rocket's parties; tea, talk, and turn-out, she calls them; tea, gossip, and scandal, say I. So come in, you will be a hundred times more comfortable with us; and if you think they will be expecting you, we can send down and tell them you are here. What do you think of doing, since the appointment is no longer to be thought of?"

"I must revert to my original intention, the endeavour to settle myself, as physician at Marston."

"Well," said Major Berrington, "I dare say that, with the exception of the climate, you

will find it the best plan of the two. At any rate you will be among friends who are selfish enough to be glad to keep you; at least, I am, for one."

"Maurice," said Georgina, pausing at the glass door which led into the old-fashioned sitting room; "I am even more selfish than papa: I do not feel the least regret that we are not to lose you. Do you know, I have missed you so much, I have almost counted the days until your return; and if I have felt this short separation thus keenly, how would it have been when you were gone for years? So I am glad, quite glad, you have not succeeded. Now scold me for my selfishness."

But Maurice would have felt this no easy task, for, as Georgina spoke, her expression of countenance was even more affectionate than her words. He looked for one short moment on her eyes, so soft and yet so speaking—then,

rapidly withdrew his own—and a dark shadow crossed his sickly brow; for, with all the sharp quick-sightedness of love, he saw and felt that, while his cousin was the object of his heart's homage, he was to her a brother, a dearly cherished brother, but nothing further.

“By the bye, Maurice,” said Major Berrington, as they sat round the plenteously supplied table, for with them the evening meal was a repast of some importance, “did you see anything of Georgina’s fine relations, when you were in town? I mean the Kingsburys.”

“I called in Bruton Street repeatedly; and once was fortunate enough to find Lady Kingsbury at home.”

“Did you see Janet, too?” eagerly inquired Georgina.

“Yes; Miss Irving was sitting with Lady Kingsbury when I was admitted.”

“And were you not enchanted with her? Is

she not beautiful? Tell me all about it, Maurice. Did you speak much together?"

"But little; Miss Irving's attention was occupied with other visiters."

"Other visiters!" said Georgina, with a slight tone of disappointment.

"Yes, Georgy, with other visiters, who were perhaps less countrified than I am."

"Some admirer probably," good-humouredly observed Major Berrington.

"But, at any rate," replied Georgina, "Janet surely found time to ask for us, for my father—for me? And has she sent no message, no letter in reply to mine?"

"Lady Kingsbury made many enquiries, and perhaps Miss Irving reserved hers, knowing she would soon have an opportunity of making them in person. Lady Kingsbury talks of paying you a visit."

"My aunt, and Janet, coming here?" cried

Georgina, "oh, how delightful! Papa, papa, do you hear what Maurice says? Janet is coming at last, to see us: actually coming to Atherley—so very kind. But when, Maurice, when will they come? Is every thing settled, the day fixed? How soon will it be? Tell me—tell me, when you think we may expect them."

"Not at all, Georgina, in all probability," said Major Berrington.

"My dear papa, you have not been listening, and do not understand. Maurice is it not fixed, positively decided on?"

"Certainly,—Lady Kingsbury spoke confidently of coming to Atherley, when her town engagements will permit; or, rather I should say, when what is called the season is over."

"Aye;" replied Major Berrington, "but there is a wide difference between words and deeds; as you will find e'er you are ten years' older, Georgina. I should as soon expect a visit from

one of the royal family as from Lady Kingsbury."

But Major Berrington was entirely mistaken, it was Lady Kingsbury's full intention to spend a few weeks at Atherley; for her son, now of age, had, on taking possession of his property, notified to his mama, in a most dutiful manner, that, excepting as an occasional and *invited* guest, her presence at the lodge would henceforth be dispensed with. And she, not knowing exactly where to bestow herself in the interval occurring between the close of the London Season, and that period of the year when house rent falls and company becomes select at watering places, was of a sudden seized with a great wish to see something of the dear Berringtons; and informed her acquaintance, right and left, that she was under an engagement to spend a month in ——shire.

"Hitherto, out of regard to Sir Marcus's

interests," lady Kingsbury said, " she had made a point of residing on the estate ; and had in consequence neglected many of her old friends and acquaintances ; but, as she was no longer necessary at Merton, she meant to gratify her inclinations by accepting invitations she had hitherto thought it her duty to decline."

Had Lady Kingsbury known precisely the sort of place to which she was about to consign herself, niece, man and maid-servant, it is very possible she would have preferred Janet's scheme, of making a short continental trip. But persons who have been always surrounded by wealth and luxury seldom realise the privations of poverty. Lady Kingsbury knew Major Berrington was not rich, and did not certainly expect to find him occupying a palace, but "the Grange" sounded well, and gave to her mind the image of a comfortable, substantial dwelling, with an establishment to corres-

pond ; in fact, a fitting residence for a gentleman of moderate income ; not, as it was in truth, a dirty, dilapidated farm-house, with one only servant to enact the various duties of housemaid, cook, parlour and lady's maid.

To Georgina's infinite delight, therefore, a few days after Maurice's return from town, a letter was received from Janet, apprising the inhabitants of the Grange that, in compliance with her earnest entreaties, Lady Kingsbury proposed spending a fortnight or three weeks with them, provided Major Berrington was quite at liberty to receive her. The Major's vexation on learning this intention nearly equalled his daughter's enchantment : for though, perhaps, he saw but half the deficiencies of his menage, there was in that half quite sufficient to assure him that a person of Lady Kingsbury's class must find herself exceedingly uncomfortable whilst under his roof ;

and gladly would he have caught at any reasonable pretext for warding off what could not but prove a very great and mutual inconvenience. But no excuse, short of a downright falsehood, presenting itself, there remained nothing but, as Miss Rocket said, "to make the best of a bad business."

"As for accomodating Lady Kingsbury here, as she would be with some of her own great acquaintances," observed Rebecca, "you know, Major, it's quite out of the question, and we must not expect it. It certainly is very tiresome she should have taken this freak into her head; but, as we can't help her coming, we must do what we can to make her comfortable whilst she is here. But don't fret, Major, don't fret; it will go off better than you think for. At any rate, if there's a day for Lady Kingsbury's coming, there will be one, too, for her going; and if she doesn't like her quarters, perhaps

she 'll change them all the sooner. So now let us see what can be done. You must have our boy, Timothy, to wait ; and you will want more forks and spoons, which we can lend you ; wax-lights also, of course, Lady Kingsbury never burns anything but wax. Georgina will want a new dress or two, the piano must be tuned ; Maurice shall send the man over from Marston ; and if he could hire a sofa it would be as well, I dare say Lady Kingsbury lies down all day, and goes to sleep after dinner : fashionable people are so indolent. That bell-string must be mended, and the lock of the bed-room door looked at, it won't close now without slamming, which is considered vulgar. The paper in this room is shockingly dirty, but there's not time to put up new ; besides, it would make the paint look worse than ever, so we must content ourselves with a good cleaning ; in fact, the whole house must have that ; I shall come

over to morrow, with my Betty, to see it is properly done. Major, you must really get yourself a new coat and waistcoat; and if you could only dispense with that horrid green shade! You cannot—well then, indeed Georgy must make you a new one; I can buy the silk when I get her dresses.”

This was, in truth, an occasion when all Rebecca's neighbourly feelings blazed forth; when her good nature appeared inexhaustible, and her exertions without limit. While Georgina, and Charlotte Arnold rifled the garden of its choicest treasures until they made a perfect green-house of the little drawing room, and poor Major Berrington, vexed and unsettled, wandered about like an unquiet ghost, wishing her Ladyship had been pleased to visit any other friend but him; Miss Rocket, more wisely, was busied in preparing for the reception of the unwelcome guests. She made tarts and

puddings, took down and put up beds and window curtains, darned carpets, tablecloths and sheets; and nearly broke her neck, in consequence of falling from the steps she had ascended, for the purpose of removing the dust from a picture of Mrs. Berrington, which hung over the chimney piece. Rebecca's beauty was not much improved by her tumble; but that was a circumstance of very little importance in her estimation: she made light of the accident, washed away the blood which streamed from her upper lip, tied a piece of brown paper steeped in vinegar on her forehead, then, declaring she was as well as ever, returned to her good-natured labours.

Nor was Theresa behind-hand in offices of good-will; a silver tea-pot and cream ewer, formerly belonging to her mother, were, with many cautionary injunctions, transferred to the custody of the Berrington's uni-domestic; and

a cut-glass smelling bottle filled with lavender water, an album containing effusions of her own, a number of the Keepsake, together with a handsomely bound edition of Marmion, were placed upon the drawing-room table.

CHAPTER VI.

At length came the day for this much expected and greatly deprecated visit.

“Well, Major,” said Rebecca, seating herself near the open window, and using her ample pocket-handkerchief for a fan, “I’ve done all I can for you now, I think, and may as well take myself off. Be sure you send over, if you happen to want me, or if anything goes wrong. But I really don’t see how that can be, I’ve explained all so particularly to Sarah, and made

Timothy say over his instructions five times. I don't think there can be any mistakes, and if Sarah doesn't over-roast the beef, or send the fish up half raw (a thing cooks are very apt to do), or burn the tart, Lady Kingsbury will have no reason to find fault with her dinner. Georgina, my dear, isn't it time for you to be going to dress? You know you should be dressed before your Aunt comes. Major, you won't forget about the wine? You know it's standing in a bucket in the back court to keep it cool, I've told Timothy. And in case any-one drinks ginger beer pray give him a hint to turn on one side when he is drawing the cork : Miss Irving would hardly relish a shower bath, I suppose. Georgina, take care how you help the fish, and remember to be very particular in asking Lady Kingsbury, whether she chuses the thick or the thin part of the salmon ; remember, too, that you 've got on a new dress

which won't be improved by spots of grease ; and pray don't forget the tea-cup in the raspberry tart, it must be put upon a plate and sent away, you know."

"I am afraid I shall make but a very indifferent carver," said Georgina.

"Don't allow yourself to think so, or you will. Rely upon it, the best way to succeed in whatever you may undertake is to feel confidence in yourself."

"I heartily wish it were over ;" half-groaned Major Berrington.

"You will have your wish in time, Major, and that is more than we can say for all wishes, so now, good bye."

Miss Rocket withdrew ; and, about an hour afterwards, a heavily laden travelling carriage and four stopped at the little wicket entrance to Major Berrington's garden.

"Surely, Robert," said Lady Kingsbury, ad-

dressing her footman, "this cannot be the place. The postboys must be mistaken. Pray enquire if they are certain they are right. The Grange, you know, the Grange—ask whether this is the Grange. I am sure——" But the approach of Major Berrington and his daughter, who now come forward to welcome their guests, put the matter beyond doubt.

"Ah, Major Berrington, how are you? This is, indeed, a pleasure; hope we're not late. We slept last night at D——, excellent accommodations; I reckoned on being here two hours ago, but we were detained for horses, the races, you know, interfere so terribly with travelling."

"I hope you are not fatigued, the heat has been great;" observed Major Berrington, assisting her to alight.

"Not in the least, I thank you, not in the least. Georgina, my dear girl, how much you are grown—taller than Janet; I never saw a

creature more improved. Well, really this is charming; quite a bower of sweets. A most lovely spot indeed, and the views perfectly beautiful. Pray don't trouble yourself, my servant will manage everything," said Lady Kingsbury, as, leaning on the arm of her host, she proceeded up the narrow gravel walk, and finally established herself on the drawing-room sofa. And,—

"What a dreadful hole you live in—insufferably hot weather, tired to death, wish I had not come; that girl is growing like a milkmaid," at the same time *thought* Lady Kingsbury.

After a few reciprocal civilities, Major Ber-
rington hastily left the drawing-room, in consequence of considerable scuffling and talking outside the door, which, he naturally concluded, arose from the difficulty of getting the luggage up the narrow, inconvenient staircase: and, great was his dismay on beholding the multi-

tude of imperials, bonnet-boxes, dressing-cases, and chaise-seats that almost blocked up the little hall.

“To judge by her luggage,” thought the miserable Major, as he helped to raise one of the Imperials, “she must purpose staying six months at the very least. What will become of me! I shall be ruined—I shall go mad with her eternal talking. I see nothing for it but to bolt, myself, and leave Georgina to get through the business as she can.”

At length, the hall was cleared, the carriage drove away, and Major Berrington returned to the drawing-room, where he found Miss Irving, languidly turning over the leaves of Theresa’s Album, and his daughter, listening to Lady Kingsbury’s account of their journey.

“Well, my dear Major,” said she, turning towards him, “I have been telling Georgy our little travelling disasters and troubles.”

“You met with no accident, I trust?”

“Oh no; nothing but delay—delay, for want of horses. The —— races are going on, and when we came to Marston, which is, you know, within a few miles of the race-course, we found we could not get a horse, for love or money; and were obliged to wait full two hours before we could get on, or we should have been here long ago. Do you usually attend those races?”

“Never; Georgy and I are quiet people, who seldom leave our own fireside.”

“I don’t very much approve of races, myself, although while my son was a minor, on his account, I made a point of never missing our county races. Now, however, that Marcus is of age, I feel myself at liberty to follow my inclination in this and in some other respects, where formerly I only considered his interests, and, as a first-fruit of my liberty, have preferred a quiet visit here, in preference to joining a

large party at the lodge. My tastes were always quiet."

"How very unfortunate;" thought Major Berrington.

"What exquisite flowers! Those carnations are really superb, you must have a very skilful gardener. Of course you send your flowers to the Horticultural meetings."

"I have not, hitherto."

"Oh, you should, indeed. My gardener gained several prizes: some of our stove-plants were allowed to be unrivalled—our pines too—"

At this instant the door of the room was opened, and Timothy, looking hot and dirty presented himself.

"Please, sir, what *is* to be done about the carriage? It won't go into the coach-house, no how whatsoever, 'tis so filled up with old trunks and lumber. And, if we was to clear them all away, I 'm mortal feared the rats would gnaw it all to pieces."

Major Berrington started on his feet ; among all his preparations for Lady Kingsbury's reception, accommodation for her carriage had been quite forgotten.

"Pray don't trouble yourself," said Lady Kingsbury : then, addressing Timothy—"Be kind enough to desire the carriage may be driven to the Inn."

Tim nodded, and withdrew ; but re-appeared in a few seconds.

"Please, my Lady, there be two houses in Atherley as has 'commodation for coaches—the Bell Inn, kept by Widow Nilkens, and the Cow and Cabbage, as belongs to Mr. Brown ; which would your Ladyship like?"

"Oh, never mind, my good friend," cried Lady Kingsbury, smiling. "I really cannot undertake to decide upon the merits of the rival houses ; let the postillions settle that matter."

“The Bell Inn is reckoned the most genteel-
erest,” replied Timothy.

“Then let it be the Bell. And now, Georgina, may I be shewn my room? I shall really be glad to make some little change in my dress, and rid myself of these unpleasant reminiscences of the turn-pike road,” said Lady Kingsbury, shaking a few grains of dust from her rich gros de Naples dress.

With the exception of the explosion of two bottles of ginger-beer, the dinner passed off fairly enough; the evening was spent in strolling about the garden; and, at half-past-ten o'clock, Lady Kingsbury, pleading fatigue, retired to her apartment, where she listened, with no little amusement, to various household details imparted by her waiting woman, who affirmed, and probably with truth, that “never before had she been in such a dog-kennel of a place.”

Janet, meanwhile, was engaged in giving Georgina a pompous description of the almost innumerable triumphs, the elegant pleasures and refined enjoyments which, since they parted, had been hers ; and Georgina's dark eyes expanded with wonder and delight as she heard of the rejected offers, the invitations that had been declined, the sums of money that had been lavished by her more favoured sister : for Georgina little knew that all this much-vaunted happiness was, in itself, as empty and as false as the description Janet gave.

“But why did you refuse him, Janet ?” she asked, as Janet concluded a long list of admirers whom she had doomed to despair, with the very romantic name (to judge from her description) of an equally romantic person. “If Sir Willoughby is so handsome, and so agreeable, and all that, and so much in love with you, why did you not accept him ?”

“ Oh, my dear, because I am fastidious, very fastidious ; my home is so happy, and I lead so delightful a life, I have no wish to change. Besides, Sir Willoughby is poor—only two thousand a year. I really could not marry a poor man—there is something so vulgar in poverty.”

“ Two thousand a year, Janet ! Do you call a man with two thousand a year, poor ? Why, Mrs. Daymour, of Bolton, has not more, and Mr. Beechcroft’s income (our clergyman) does not reach one ; Maurice, too, says that, if he could be certain of five hundred, he would be content. Janet, you cannot be in earnest ?”

“ I am, perfectly. To me, two thousand a year appears little better than poverty ; others, to be sure, such people as your Mr. Beechcroft, or Mr. Arnold, might be satisfied with less ; but I can see no happiness without a good income. In my opinion, for comfort,

even for health, one must have a sufficient number of servants, and a good sized house. I, positively, could not exist in a cottage; I should die of suffocation were I to inhabit one; small, low rooms are my aversion," replied Janet, drawing a deep breath as she concluded.

"I fear, then," said Georgina timidly, "you will be very uncomfortable here."

"Don't mention it," replied Miss Irving, with a patronizing air; "we are but birds of passage, and, for a short time, anything is endurable. Besides, were I a hundred times more inconvenienced, I would gladly bear it for the sake of seeing you, my sweet Georgina."

Georgina threw her arms round Janet's neck. "I wish," she said, "we could make the Grange better worthy of you; it is, I know, a sad old place, and papa and I quite unused to visiters. But tell me, dearest Janet, if there is anything we can do to make you more com-

fortable ? What does my aunt particularly prefer ? And how will she like to spend her time ? The country round is reckoned very pretty, and we have one or two picturesque old ruins. Lord Lineageleigh's place, too, is well worth seeing. Do you think a pic-nic exploring party would be pleasant ?”

“ A pic-nic exploring party !” exclaimed Janet, with some animation. “ Pic-nics are sometimes very delightful ; but then the company must be well chosen. The last pic-nic I was at, we went a party down the Thames to Richmond. Perceval D'Esterre was with us. Have you ever seen Perceval D'Esterre ?”

“ No,” was, of course, the answer.

“ Oh, no, to be sure not ; how could you have met him. But who are we to have for this exploring expedition ?”

“ Oh,” said Georgina, “ there are the Arnolds and their aunt, Miss Rocket, and Miss Flagge, and the two Mr. Brambers.”

“Who are they?” interrupted Janet.

“The eldest is a lawyer at Marston.”

“Enough,” rejoined Miss Irving. “We must blackball the Mr. Brambers. I do not affect lawyers, unless they be also sons to men of ten thousand a year; and a country lawyer would annihilate me. So, name some other cavaliers.”

“I know no other gentleman: but we should not want them; it is not here as in London; we should be quite safe under Maurice Arnold’s escort.”

“You spoke of the Arnolds; what are they?”

“Maurice’s sisters, my second cousins. Surely, you must remember how they used all to laugh at me, when at Miss Maxwells, for talking so incessantly about them.”

“I do remember something of it. Five, are there not, five sisters?”

“Yes, there are five.”

“How dreadful! I’m glad I have not five sisters. And are none of them married yet?”

“None; but the third, Belinda, is engaged to Captain Slycer, of the —— Infantry.”

“A man of fortune?”

“Oh no, very little.”

“What a fool she must be to marry him!”

“Belinda says she is attached to him.”

“That does not make her conduct wiser. But I am tired now, good night. We can settle our plans to-morrow. I am really quite knocked up. Only, while I think of it, one word of caution, my dear girl: don’t let your father press his hospitalities, too much, on Lady Kingsbury, It’s not well bred in the first place, and, in the next, I had no little trouble in persuading our good aunt to come here at all, and if she fancies she is likely to be laid violent hands on, and detained *à force de politesses*, the chances are, she will order the horses, and be off, instantaner.”

Georgina kissed her sister, and withdrew. For a few minutes Janet remained meditating on their different positions; and a bright smile of triumph kindled her eye, and played around her lip, as she drew a comparison, all the advantages of which rested so eminently on her side. But an envious disposition always finds something on which to fasten, and Janet was not long in recollecting that, while the rays of fond, parental love shed their soft influence upon Georgina's lot, the sentiments Lady Kingsbury had imbibed *for her* were but *habitual*—any person to whose presence she had been accustomed for the same number of years would have been equally interesting. Even her home, Miss Irving knew to be precarious. Lady Kingsbury had nieces of her own, who would gladly have taken Janet's place; and it was by no means improbable that the time might come when, swayed by caprice, Lady

Kingsbury would withdraw her patronage from Janet, and bestow it on her immediate relatives. That Lady Kingsbury did sometimes contemplate such a change was evident, both from the expressions she would occasionally let fall, and from her increasing anxiety to see her present charge established in another home.

“Janet,” she would say, “you play your cards badly; with your advantages, you ought to have married long ago. Indeed, my dear girl, you must begin to look about you: this is your third season and no prospect whatever of your being settled. Lady Mary Brice and I were speaking of it the other night; and she thinks, with me, that you are too fastidious—aim at too high a mark. There cannot be a greater error; a common one, I grant you; all girls are apt to over-rate their pretensions; but it is a very great mistake. For men of large fortune, and Peers’ eldest sons, never marry girls without

money: they can't afford it. Nothing but professional men, or younger brothers think of young women with such fortunes as yours. Therefore, pray take my advice, and be less exclusive; exclusiveness is admirable policy for a man, but it is injurious to a woman, very injurious; unless, indeed, her claims be of the very highest order. I'm really beginning to feel anxious to see you well settled. When you are married I shall have Eliza Fitzgrove to live with me; a very sweet girl is Eliza Fitzgrove, the image of my dear, deceased sister. Lord William Knyvett admires her exceedingly; and, with a little good management, I have no doubt it would be a match. Both Eliza's sisters have made excellent matches, although they have not so much money as you, Janet; and nothing like the introduction I have been able to give you. It certainly is very strange you do not marry."

Janet was of the same opinion; for, in reality, the list of suitors that had so surprised Georgina was of her own creation. It is true, her aunt's dinner parties and Opera tickets, joined to her personal attractions, had drawn around her many admirers; but, with one or two insignificant exceptions, none were serious in their intentions; they danced, talked, flirted, but would go no further; they were quite willing to amuse themselves, but not to marry; they accepted Lady Kingsbury's invitations, but declined her niece. Janet's high-flown expectations were falling to the ground.

Her peace of mind, however, remained uninjured during her first two seasons; but she was not to pass, unscathed, a third ordeal. In the spring of the present year, a Mr. D'Esterre was added to the number of admirers, and so marked were his attentions, so apparently devoted was his manner, that Janet became

deeply interested, or rather, perhaps, attached. Most other girls would probably have done the same; for Perceval was handsome, intelligent, and fashionable — his fortune reported ample, his connexions good—and his character unimpeachable. He was, besides, his own master; and, quite an exception to the generality of men of six-and-twenty, actually professed a wish to marry.

Under all these considerations, Miss Irving saw no necessity for repressing her new-born sentiments. Hitherto, her ready vanity had traced her admirers' backwardness to want of fortune, friends' interference, disinclination to be manacled for life—and so on. But nothing of the kind existed here; and, as Mr. D'Esterre was evidently much enamoured, she suffered herself to entertain, not the hope, but the certainty, that the close of the season would find her on her way into ——shire, in a chariot

and four, with the individual whose society she coveted above all others by her side.

That Janet took no such journey, our readers are well aware ; nor need they be informed that, as, unhappily, is frequently the case, when young ladies plan such expeditions, the gentleman's caprice, or fickleness it was, which caused the downfall of these pleasant expectations. After nearly two months' assiduous attention — after dancing with her — walking with her — riding by the carriage window — sitting for hours at the house — in short, doing everything that usually precedes an offer, Perceval suddenly left town, without even attempting an explanation.

Some girls would have been ready to break their hearts ; Janet did nothing of the kind. She was disappointed, but not desponding ; she believed the completion of her wishes postponed, not altogether lost : and, far from en-

deavouring to forget the recreant knight, she relieved the irksomeness of her stay at Atherley by indulging in an almost perpetual reverie, in which Perceval, with his soft hazle eyes, his chesnut hair, slight figure, and graceful mien, was ever present to her mind.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the inconvenience to which she subjected Major Berrington, Lady Kingsbury never, for a moment, thought of shortening her stay at Atherley. Indeed, on such occasions, people are far more apt to consult their own, than their host's, convenience: on which account it is highly impolitic to give an unlimited invitation; if you wish your friends to stay a month, ask them for a fortnight; and you may congratulate yourself if,

at the end of the fourth week, your house is clear.

Altogether, however, the visit was not so tedious as might have been expected. Time flies fast where there is little variety to mark his progress ; and, as Lady Kingsbury made herself quite at home, Major Berrington speedily forgot to look upon her as a guest. and, relapsing into his old habits, spent the greater portion of his time amid his dearly cherished flowers. Janet amused herself as above stated ; Lady Kingsbury wrote letters, or worked tapestry ; while Georgina wandered from one to another, offering her services as she thought they might be wanted.

But, although she had not scrupled making a convenience of the Major's house, Lady Kingsbury was not blind to the trouble she had given ; nor altogether without inclination

to repay it. She belonged, in fact, to that numerous class of persons who are willing enough to be kind and good-natured, provided they can be so without incurring trouble or expense; and, in accordance with this characteristic, she thus addressed Miss Irving, a few days before that on which their visit was to terminate.

“Janet, do you think Major Berrington would part with Georgina for a few weeks? I’ve a great mind to ask her to go with us to Eastbeach; but she really seems so necessary to her father, I hardly like to propose it.”

“Indeed, my dear aunt, it would almost amount to cruelty. How could Major Berrington exist without my sister?”

“It would, however, be a great advantage to Georgina, were she to see a little of the world; and, for her sake, perhaps, he would

make the sacrifice. At any rate, I can but ask ; whether he consents or not, the compliment will be the same, and I shall be saved the necessity of making a handsome present in return for his civility ; which, to say the truth I should feel rather inconvenient just now ; nor do I quite see what I could give—trinkets would be of no use to a girl who never sees a creature.”

“ A pretty dress might be useful, and might, perhaps, be met with cheap. Indeed, I am sure nothing would be more acceptable, Georgina’s wardrobe is so scantily supplied.”

“ True,” replied Lady Kingsbury ; catching however, only at the last idea. “ Georgina’s dress would bear improvement. But, of course, if she comes with me, I shall see that she has proper clothes to wear ; and really, if she were differently dressed, Georgina would be an exceedingly fine girl.”

“Oh, yes,” cried Janet, with affected eagerness, “my sister is, at times, perfectly beautiful. Don’t you remember how much Marcus used to admire her?”

Lady Kingsbury paused in her benevolent intentions to consider whether her son were likely to persevere in his admiration of his cousin, and how far that admiration might lead him ; while Janet, thinking she had struck the right chord, continued sounding her sister’s praise.

“You are enthusiastic, Janet,” said Lady Kingsbury, at length ; “you exaggerate her beauty. But I am glad to see you feel thus : it is right sisters should love each other, and you have been too much separated. But, in future, we will manage otherwise. If Georgina marries (and I really should not be surprised at her marrying extremely well, provided she were in

the way of it), you will, of course, live principally with her; and, perhaps, have better luck under her chaperonage than under mine."

Janet became pale with indignation at the notion; but the well-practised hypocrite suppressed her feelings.

"I fear, my dear aunt, that what your kindness has failed to effect I may hardly expect through any other channel. But do you indeed think it would be possible to entice Georgina away from home? It would make me so happy to have her society; and she, dear girl, would so enjoy the change. How very, very kind you are. I only fear Major Berrington will never consent to part with her."

"I will try what I can do, at any rate," replied Lady Kingsbury, who, reflecting that her son's engagements would detain him in —shire until after Christmas, no longer saw

the slightest risk in withdrawing Georgina from her obscurity.

Her proposal met with no opposition. Anxious, on Georgina's account, to cultivate the good-will of her mother's family, Major Berrington readily consented to part with her for a few weeks ; and she, secure that, while she was away, Charlotte, Maurice, and their other kind-hearted neighbours would be unremitting in attention to her father, looked forward to the excursion with all the delight and eagerness of that period of our existence when life's enchanted cup is sparkling still—when hope is vivid as reality—and joy a mountain rivulet that gushes merrily along, nor deems how much the goal it seeks shall sully its bright waters.

Very different were Janet's feelings upon this occasion ; she saw her sister take her place

in Lady Kingsbury's carriage with a degree of dissatisfaction even she could scarcely master or conceal; for Miss Irving could not disguise from herself that Georgina's beauty would constitute her a most dangerous rival in one respect, and her obliging disposition in another. She might, at once, outshine Janet in the ball-room, and supplant her in the good graces of their mutual relative; for more than once had Lady Kingsbury lauded Georgina's talent and dexterity in the performance of all those little offices for which the old must be indebted to the young; and which, when tendered with ready willingness, prove so attaching.

As Lady Kingsbury had not previously engaged a house, on reaching Eastbeach they drove immediately to the principal hotel.

"Fine eyes, by Jove!" said a vulgar-looking man, who passed them as they entered.

Lady Kingsbury looked offended, and drew Georgina's arm within hers ; while Janet was irritated even by this equivocal compliment.

“ Georgina,” she said, when they were undressing to go to bed, “ I hope you mean speedily to adopt a more consistent style of dress ; the man who spoke so vulgarly about your eyes evidently took you for the lady's maid.”

“ The lady's maid !”

“ Yes, the lady's maid. You do not, surely, suppose he would have ventured to make so impertinent a remark had he imagined you to belong to the upper classes ?”

“ Do I look like a servant ?” enquired Georgina, with some mortification.

“ Not when properly dressed ; but, really, in that calico gown—”

“ I will never wear it again. And yet, when

Lady Wrighton and her daughters called the other day, they had on dresses very like to mine, and you admired Miss Wrighton's appearance."

"Very likely. Some people have, naturally, so distingué an air that they can wear anything; but that is not your case."

"I suppose not," replied Georgina, "since I am mistaken for a lady's maid."

"That dress—"

"Is odious; and I, certainly, will never appear in it again. But silk is very expensive, and spots so terribly; and I have but one."

"You can purchase others, I suppose. Major Berrington told you to get whatever would be necessary."

"Yes; papa gave me five pounds to pay all my personal expenses, letters, &c. Do you think, Janet, I may venture on another silk

dress? I should so like a Levantine, like yours. Do you think I might venture to buy one?"

"I really cannot tell; but we will enquire the price of silks tomorrow, and, if you find you cannot manage it, I suppose I must see how far I can assist you."

"Dearest Janet, how kind, how very kind you are!"

"My funds are low, just now, I fear; but on your account I would gladly make a sacrifice, for I am anxious about your appearance, my dear girl; and really dress makes so much difference."

"It does, indeed."

"And you are just the person who should be very particular as to what you wear."

"I certainly am a very dowdy-looking creature," thought Georgina, glancing at herself in

the glass. "I hope nobody will ever look at me again."

Janet saw by her countenance how vexed Georgina felt, and she was satisfied. She had gained her point: by lowering her sister's opinion of herself, she increased the timidity, which was, in truth, the greatest drawback she possessed.

From time immemorial it has been the custom for heroines to rise early, walk before breakfast, and meet with adventures. Georgina did the first, but her walk extended only to the sitting room, and her adventures were none. For some time she amused herself with looking from the bay window, which fronted the sea and overlooked the fashionable promenade. And she saw machines going in and out of the water—ladies in poke bonnets, followed by maid-servants carrying bundles—gentlemen loungers

sitting on the benches—donkeys, and children. Then she became excessively hungry, and rather sentimental; and finally, opened her work-box and began hemming muslin frills. Lady Kingsbury and breakfast were most welcome; and not less was her ladyship's resolution of setting forth in quest of houses, on the conclusion of the meal.

Lady Kingsbury was not easily suited: she required a good house, a good situation, and a low rent; and they knocked at doors, went up and down staircases, and in and out of rooms, until Georgina marvelled that a person thus fastidious found it possible to remain for so long a period beneath her father's most uncomfortable roof. At length, Lady Kingsbury, having explored every tolerable looking residence that was at that time vacant, decided upon taking one, in what was called the South Parade, and

which happened by the way, to be the very first she had looked at. There, they dined off fried soles, and mutton chops; and there, Georgina spent a most delightful evening, reading one of the light productions of the day; no matter which — it was a most amusing work, and all, who have written such a one, may believe it theirs.

The next day she was happier still: her wardrobe underwent a revision, and was much improved by some additions made by Lady Kingsbury, partly from good nature, and partly from regard to her own respectability. Janet also, having selected a slight silk of the colour most unbecoming to Georgina's complexion, presented it with many expressions of interest to her sister, by whom the paltry present was received with grateful affection.

Henceforth, their time was spent after the

profitable manner time is usually spent by the sea-side : a mode of life I need surely not describe ; since the majority of those who deem these pages worthy a perusal are doubtless well acquainted with the goings on of watering-place frequenters. How acquaintances meet on the beach or esplanade, smile, tell each other that the day is fine, and then pass on—how riding, driving, walking parties are projected, and people go in shoals, and inconvenient carriages, to see sights, and visit places, and admire scenery, for which, nearer their own homes, they would not have gone five steps out of their way—how there are balls at the assembly rooms, which the aristocratic portion of the company do not patronise, and the less fastidious do—how the gentlemen lounge at the libraries or billiard rooms, criticise the appearance of the belles, and speculate upon their fortunes—how

the young ladies walk, and the elder ones gossip—how all are idle, all restless, many dissatisfied.

Georgina, however, was not amongst the last; the novelty and animation of the whole gave it a zest to one entirely unhacknied in such scenes; and could she sometimes have persuaded Janet to exchange the more frequented walks for a ramble, or, rather, I should say, a scramble on the rocks, she would have pronounced Eastbeach a most enchanting spot.

Both sisters met with much admiration; and, for a while, opinion balanced between them; but eventually the palm was given to the youngest. For, while Miss Irving was allowed to be the best dressed girl in Eastbeach, Georgina was the handsomest; and it is quite astonishing what short turns people were in the habit of taking when she was on the esplanade;

and how nearly were the rules of politeness infringed, as the gentlemen endeavoured to penetrate the recesses of a somewhat close bonnet, that they might catch a glimpse of her dark speaking eyes and sunny smile. The object of their admiration was far from being gratified, for, totally devoid of vanity, she traced the notice she attracted to any motive but the right one; and Janet, well aware how much self-confidence would increase her sister's loveliness, took good care she should not be better informed.

But it was gall and wormwood to her envious mind.

“Georgina,” she said, one afternoon, “this being so constantly in public is really very tiresome: do let us try and find out some quieter place, where we can walk without being stared out of countenance.”

“Shall we try the sands?” enquired Georgina. “The tide is out, and, once round that point, we shall be quite alone. Nobody ever walks there. Do come, Janet.”

Janet agreed; they set off in the proposed direction, while Lady Kingsbury, afraid of wetting her feet, preferred seating herself by a London acquaintance.

“How delightful this is !” said Georgina, enchanted to escape the thralldom of the public walk. “So superior to the Esplanade. Janet, let us always walk here.”

“Yes,” replied Janet, languidly, “it is very agreeable.”

“So quiet, too ; not a creature near ; now we have turned the point we might almost fancy ourselves in an uninhabited island.”

“I am sure that would be little to my taste,”

replied Janet, with a slight laugh. "I like man kind better than solitude."

"Look at the sea, how beautifully calm it is. Oh! this is indeed a very lovely spot."

"Do you never think of your father, Georgina? He must miss you sadly," observed Janet, after a short pause.

"Yes, I often think of papa, and wish for him; were he but here I think I should be too happy."

"Is Major Berrington the only person you would like to transport hither from Atherley?"

"There are many persons at home I love."

"And *one par excellence*."

"Certainly, Charlotte Arnold is my favourite cousin."

"What is her brother?"

"He does not live at Atherley."

"He is there a great deal, at any rate," said

Janet, archly. And I should think Mr. Arnold's presence not altogether unwelcome to a certain fair lady of my acquaintance."

"Do you mean me?"

"Yes; you are the culprit. Is not Mr. Arnold as great a favourite as his sister?"

"Yes, yes; I love Maurice, dearly," replied Georgina, with far more frankness than her sister wished. "And so would you, Janet, if you knew him as well as I do."

At this moment, two gentlemen on horseback suddenly emerged from behind the projecting cliffs, and Georgina felt Miss Irving grasp her arm. Both gentlemen bowed, and, in returning the salutation, Janet's complexion deepened, and her whole countenance became radiant with surprise and pleasure.

"Who is that?" inquired Georgina.

"Colonel Stafford."

“Yes, yes, I know; but who is the other?”

“A gentleman I knew in London, Mr. D’Esterre,” Janet answered, still blushing. “But don’t look round, Georgina; we shall have them joining us. Pray don’t look back; it is so very vulgar.”

“I did not,” replied Georgina.

“Pardon me.”

“I was not aware of it; I did not know I turned my head.”

“You never know anything. It is quite surprising, Georgina, how ignorant of good breeding you shew yourself to be; I am constantly quite in trepidation for you—for I see that people are always wondering what you are, and where you came from.”

“I, certainly, have not had your advantages,” replied Georgina; who, however, had been guilty of no such solecism in good manners as Janet chose to assert.

“If you had, it would have made no difference. You want tact, observation. All the society in the world would not have made you anything but what you are. Now, don’t loiter so—never mind that sea-weed—you may find twenty such bunches; and if we stand dawdling in this way, those men will think we want them to join us.”

They continued walking for about ten minutes longer, when Janet suddenly became very nervous, and timid.

“There is one point,” she said, “in which you are greatly my superior, and that is, in courage. Do you know, I am the greatest coward in existence: and now, that it is getting late, I do not feel comfortable at being in so lonely a place. I don’t think it can be safe. See, what an ill-looking man that is—indeed, Georgy, I cannot stay here—you must humour me, by returning to the haunts of men.”

Georgina readily acquiesced ; and, with erect mien and buoyant footstep, Janet retraced her way. For the hope that Perceval had come to Eastbeach in pursuit of her was fluttering at her heart—her ill-natured strictures, too, had encreased Georgina's colour to a most unbecoming shade : for once, therefore, at any rate, her sister would prove not a rival—but a foil.

They reached the Esplanade ; but, as “ the haunts of men ” held not the individual most interesting to Miss Irving, after taking two or three turns, she declared herself fatigued, and proposed, as Lady Kingsbury had returned home, that they should follow her. Georgina went straight up to her bed-room, while Janet entered the drawing-room where Lady Kingsbury was sitting, and, after some little circumlocution, expressed a desire to join a party who

were going to the rooms that evening. Lady Kingsbury replied by reminding her that, when the idea was first suggested, she had declared herself against it in a most decided manner.

“True,” rejoined Miss Irving; “for, you know, I dislike all this sort of thing exceedingly, I consider watering-place gaieties in the very worst taste. But the Stopfords are all anxiety that we should go; indeed, they have said so much about it, I hardly see how we can remain at home without its being supposed we wish to give ourselves airs. So that, for once, perhaps, it might not be amiss to go, just for an hour or so; you know, if we do but show ourselves it will be enough. I understand, also, it is expected to be a good ball; Sir Charles Treadway’s family, and almost all the people from the neighbourhood, are coming.”

“Oh,” replied Lady Kingsbury, “I’ve not

the slightest objection. On the contrary, from the first, I was anxious to go, on account of Georgina, who has so few opportunities of seeing any thing of the sort."

"Georgina? Do you think of taking her?"

"To be sure I do, why should Georgina not have the benefit of any little amusement that is passing?"

"My dear aunt, I question whether she would consider it amusement."

"Then she must be very unlike other girls of her age."

"Her excessive shyness, and the quiet life she has hitherto led, render my sister averse to anything like society ; besides, I am very much afraid she has no dress, excepting that white muslin she wore last week, when we were drinking tea with Lady Ditchley."

"Of course, if Georgina really wishes to remain at home, she must ; but, for my part, I

think it would be a pity. How is she ever to get over that shyness, if she shuts herself up? As for her dress—at seventeen, we do not expect a very elaborate toilet; her muslin will do extremely well: and while we are at dinner, Turner shall see whether she cannot find some white roses. I should think Miss Paxton must have some. White roses will suit Georgina's dark hair. I've no doubt she will look very pretty in white roses."

"Oh, yes, I'm certain of it—and, I can lend her some of my pearl ornaments. They will be very becoming—and now, I will go and try to induce her to come," said Janet, leaving the room, with the full intention of persuading Georgina to remain behind.

"Georgy, you cannot think how much I envy you;" exclaimed Miss Irving, and, for once, perhaps, speaking the truth.

“Envy me, Janet! What is there about me to envy?”

“A great deal; for you are at liberty to consult your own inclination, and may remain cosily at home to-night—while I accompany my aunt to this abominable ball.”

“What ball?”

“The ball at the rooms. You know, I always hate such things—crowded, vulgar, and disagreeable. But that matters little; go I must.”

“I did not know that any one was going.”

“Nor I, until this minute: but it seems my aunt has been talked into it; and I cannot of course refuse, however disagreeable I find the notion. But say nothing about it, Georgy, I would not for the world she suspected how annoyed I am.”

“And Lady Kingsbury does not wish me to go?” inquired Georgina, who felt something

very like an inclination to mingle in a scene, whose charms Janet had often glowingly described.

“My aunt wishes you to do exactly as you feel disposed ; which I conclude will be to stay quietly at home, and amuse yourself with the book you are so much interested in—I am sure there will be nothing half so entertaining at the ball. I really envy you your power of choice.”

“You think I should not like a ball ?”

“You know your own taste best ; for my part, I should not, for an instant, hesitate between quiet, with an amusing book, and the ennui of a ball-room.”

“Perhaps, it would not be tiresome.”

“Perhaps not ; but the chances are that you would find it so. In all probability, Lady Kingsbury will seat herself at the card-table ; I shall, of course, do all I can to prevent your feeling dull and awkward ; but I may be obliged

to dance a great deal; and, having so few acquaintances, you will perhaps find yourself very uncomfortably situated. Just fancy yourself seated at the back of my aunt's chair, your whole entertainment being to watch the game, count the honours, or speculate on the odd trick; while all the girls, who cannot get partners, criticise your appearance, and the men, who happen not to choose to dance, stand staring at you."

"It would be dreadful, indeed. But, perhaps somebody would ask me to dance? Do you think I have no chance, whatever, of a partner?"

"Very little—a girl who goes into a ball-room knowing no one, seldom finds herself in much request. I shall never forget my first ball; if my aunt had not been very peremptory on the subject, I believe I should never have ventured to a second: indeed, the whole of my first season was anything but pleasant. Still,

you know it is a lottery, and if you feel inclined to make the trial, I will do all I can to get you partners."

"Thank you, dear Janet, I know you would: but indeed, I think I had better stay at home."

This determination was, however, overruled: Lady Kingsbury, finding that timidity alone influenced Georgina, felt it an act of duty to interfere; and, at rather a late hour, no little stir pervaded the ball-room in consequence of the unexpected appearance of that lady and her protégées.

They were decidedly the most interesting girls in the room. Miss Irving, dressed in the very perfection of good taste; her colour, heightened, and her eyes glistening with the delightful hope of meeting Perceval D'Esterre, was indeed a very lovely object—while Georgina, rather more pale than ordinary, owing to the trepidation she could not conquer, a few

white flowers wreathed amidst her jetty tresses, her graceful form veiled rather than concealed, by the soft folds of her light, simple dress, looked like some dark-eyed daughter of a Southern clime. They were totally unlike, yet each was beautiful.

The result of that evening's entertainment was as opposite as the personal appearance of these two fair beings. On entering the ball-room, Janet's well-practised glance soon ascertained that Perceval D'Esterre was not amongst the crowd; and, forthwith, she wished herself at home again. Two quadrilles only would she condescend to dance, and those with the two first men in the room. Georgina, on the other hand, gladly, even gratefully, accepted every partner; and, as a crowded room is far less formidable than an empty one, she speedily forgot that any one was likely to observe her, and enjoyed herself exceedingly.

“ Oh, I ’ve spent such a delightful evening !” she exclaimed, as they were driving home. “ I shall never be afraid of going to a ball again.”

“ I am glad of it, my dear,” replied Lady Kingsbury, “ I am very glad to hear it. I always like to see young people happy, and enjoying themselves. How many quadrilles did you dance ?”

“ Seven,” answered Georgina, after a minute’s consideration.

“ And you, Janet ?”

“ I danced twice — once with Sir Henry Studeley, and once with Mr. Oswald, Lord Hilpington’s son.”

“ What were your partners’ names, Georgina ?” asked Lady Kingsbury.

“ I ’m sure, I don’t know ; at least, I only remember what two of them were called. I hardly even heard the names of the others ; or, if I did, I have forgotten them.”

“And who were those two?”

“Major Philpot, and Mr. White.”

“And which of the gentlemen you danced with did you like best?”

“Indeed, my dear Aunt, I saw no difference; they seemed to me all alike.”

“Was not one more agreeable than the other?”

“No, indeed.”

“What did you talk about?”

“Talk about, dear aunt! nothing. There was no time for conversation—and that is one reason why I like balls better than any other amusement; you have nothing to do but to dance, and change partners.”

“Ah, Georgina, but you must do something more than that, in future, or your partners will never ask you a second time.”

“Oh, yes, I know; I must bow to all these gentlemen; the lady bows first, or it is sup-

posed she wishes to drop the acquaintance. I mean to be very attentive, and bow to every gentleman who is kind enough to be my partner."

"Yes, my dear girl: but, unless you follow up your bow with something entertaining, you may bow in vain. I mean that you must prove yourself capable of amusing—you must converse; it is not enough that a woman is attractive—she should, also, be agreeable; she must be liked, as well as admired. In these days, men are not satisfied with a mere well-dressed doll, or pretty-looking picture."

"I should never know what to say."

"Subjects for conversation will arise; or, if they do not, you must make them."

"Make subjects for conversation? Oh, my dear aunt, that would be impossible!"

"Not at all; you have excellent abilities, and, with a little exertion, would find yourself

quite as equal to converse as any other girl. So, remember my advice, and let me see you talk, as well as dance, to-morrow evening."

Those of my readers who happen to be troubled with *mauvaise honte* will be prepared to hear that Lady Kingsbury's injunctions produced an effect the opposite of her intention. Indeed, the very notion she was expected to converse, the consciousness of being watched, paralysed Georgina's faculties, and sealed her lips. She became, if possible, more silent than before ; and the consequence appeared fully to justify her aunt's predictions. For, though Miss Berrington was still universally allowed to be the belle of Eastbeach—though almost every stranger sought an introduction—though all admired, none shewed a wish for further intimacy—her shyness seemed contagious. Lady Kingsbury, highly annoyed, repeated her exhortations, but without inducing any change.

Georgina's timidity remained invincible, and her aunt, greatly mortified, gave up the case as hopeless; and began to look upon her as a wilful girl, who would not profit by advice.

Lady Kingsbury's vexation was not, altogether, of Georgina's making. To Janet's mind, already soured by disappointment, Georgina's successful *début* was peculiarly distasteful; and, listening only to the malevolent suggestions of her envious heart, she resolved to tarnish, as she could not utterly destroy, the lustre of her sister's triumph. It was not long ere an occasion presented itself.

"Miss Berrington is a splendid creature," observed Colonel Stafford, "a very fine girl, indeed; and I venture to predict for her a first-rate marriage."

"Not if I can help it," thought Janet, to whom the remark had been addressed, and who listened with an air of apparent satisfaction.

“Yes,” continued the Colonel, following Georgina with his eyes, “she is exceedingly handsome—has made some havoc here already; Oswald is half in love with her; and, though that won’t do, for, you know, he wants money, can’t marry under sixty thousand pounds, at least, he ’ll not be the only one, take my word for it. A little more animation, and a slight degree of fashion, which she will gain from one season in town, and your sister will find herself the theme of universal praise.”

“Perhaps, she has no such wish.”

“Pardon me, but I do not think there exists a woman who does not care for admiration—flattery is the very food you live upon.”

“You forget Lady Mary S—, who withstood so hot an attack last spring.”

Colonel Stafford laughed good-humouredly, although he had been among the disappointed aspirants for Lady Mary’s hand.

“There was,” he said, “a reason good in Lady Mary’s case ; the enemy was in the citadel ; she had already capitulated.”

“Perhaps, Georgina is similarly situated.”

“Ha ! Is Miss Berrington engaged ?”

“No, not positively engaged ; it is only—but what am I doing ? I ought not to have mentioned this at all—pray forget my imprudence, and let my foolish communication go no farther.”

“Tell me the name of the favoured man, and you shall find me all discretion.”

“No, no, I cannot—indeed I cannot,” replied Janet, in an earnest tone. “It is a very foolish piece of business—quite against the wishes of her family, and I really hope will never come to anything. So promise me you will not repeat it. Above all, don’t give me as your authority, and avoid making any allusion, on the subject, to my sister ; you will distress her, beyond measure, if you do.”

Colonel Stafford promised silence; and so far kept his word that he merely advised his friend Oswald to take care how he fell in love with an engaged woman. And Oswald, who declared he never gave Miss Berrington a second thought, talked about her and her engagement until it was pretty generally known in East-beach.

Thus Janet's manœuvre succeeded, beyond her expectation. People do not run into danger with their eyes open; not one, therefore, of Georgina's most determined admirers endeavoured to cultivate an acquaintance with a very lovely girl, no longer mistress of her hand and heart. And, as the persons most interested in similar reports are generally the very last to hear them, it was some time before even a surmise of this rumour reached Lady Kingsbury. She, of course, gave it an unqualified, and most decided denial; but it was too late—the mis-

chief was already done—Georgina continued to be shunned as an engaged woman; and her reserved manner and apparent indifference to admiration were attributed to pre-occupied affection.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE are seasons when wind and tide are in our favour, and we sail blithely on—when every thing we turn our hand to prospers—when it would almost seem impossible to *wish*—for all our hearts' desires appear already given. Such was now Janet's lot. She had contrived to throw Georgina into the back-ground ; she had weakened the interest Lady Kingsbury had shewn herself disposed to take in her ; and, to crown all, Perceval D'Esterre, after a little

hesitation and backwardness, became more assiduous in his attentions than even formerly.

The greatest portion of his mornings was spent loitering in Lady Kingsbury's drawing-room ; in the long rambles the sisters took together (now always in the most private direction), he was Miss Irving's shadow ; he made, not unfrequently, a fourth at their dinner table ; and, during the evening, whilst Georgina read, and Lady Kingsbury worked or wrote, Janet would seat herself at the piano, and Perceval hang over her, apparently, without a thought or wish beyond the pleasure of the present moment.

Never, on these occasions, were Georgina's musical powers called into requisition ; for, although in point of science, all the advantage lay on Janet's side, it was not so with regard to natural endowment. Miss Irving's voice was weak, sometimes even thin and wiry ;

while Georgina's wild, rich, melodious tones, all unscientific as they were, fell on the ear like sounds from fairy-land. Janet knew her inferiority, and was careful to avoid competition with so dangerous a rival. Whenever, therefore, Lady Kingsbury hinted that Georgina *could* sing, or proposed a duett, Miss Irving would second Georgina's entreaties to escape, with so much dexterity and earnestness as never failed to avert an exhibition, equally dreaded by both sisters, though from such widely different motives.

It chanced, however, one afternoon, when Lady Kingsbury was from home, and Janet above stairs, that Georgina, finding herself sole occupant of the drawing-room, opened the piano, and began singing some of her favourite ballads. The music, naturally carried back her mind to Atherley; and her voice became more richly soft—more tenderly melodious, as

home feelings and remembrances gathered around her heart. She had been thus occupied some twenty or thirty minutes, when a slight rustling caught her¹ attention, and, quickly turning, to her no little annoyance, she beheld Mr. D'Esterre, who had omitted to close the door of the apartment he had entered, unperceived. Thus, whilst believing herself quite alone, Georgina had been overheard by the person in the world she imagined most inclined to criticise and depreciate her performance. For, as Mr. D'Esterre seldom vouchsafed to address her even in the most cursory manner, she entertained a notion that she was an object of dislike to him.

“Pray don't close the book, Miss Berrington; if you do, I shall consider it a rebuke for my impertinence in entering your presence without taking the usual step of a formal announcement — a liberty; I should not, per-

haps, have ventured upon, but that positively, I could meet with no gentleman in waiting who would perform that ceremony for me. Lady Kingsbury's groom of the chambers, at the time I required his services, was so intent on determining the name and size of yonder vessel that to withdraw him from his conference with the old fisherman, whose telescope he had borrowed, would have been absolutely cruel. Indeed, I believe, he had prepared against such an unwelcome demand of his services, for I found the house door placed most invitingly open."

"My aunt is not at home," said Georgina.

"I am aware of it: Lady Kingsbury is at Willis's Library, where she begs Miss Irving and you will join her; to convey which message, and escort you to the spot, I am her deputed agent."

"I will tell my sister," replied Georgina, hurrying out of the room.

In the course of a very short time, Janet, fully equipped for walking, made her appearance.

“How is it,” enquired Perceval, after repeating Lady Kingsbury’s message, “how is it that I have never heard Miss Berrington sing until this morning, and then, only, as it were, by stealth?”

“Georgina is so shy and uncertain that she never sings before strangers. I mean that, for want of having been properly taught, and perhaps, from a slight natural deficiency of ear, she has no control over her voice; and will one day delight, almost electrify you with its power and extent; whilst on the next, or perhaps even sooner, she will produce an effect nearly as astonishing the other way. And as I know *mauvaise honte* always places her in this disadvantageous position, I never urge her to sing or play, when there

appears the slightest danger of its occurring: that is to say, whenever strangers are present."

"It is a thousand pities so exquisite a talent should be thus buried !"

"It is indeed ; I have done all I can to counteract the groundless feelings which prove so great a drawback ; but they are, I fear, constitutional and therefore invincible."

"Still, as I have once enjoyed the gratification of hearing Miss Berrington sing, I trust she will not in future consider me as a stranger."

Here Georgina joined them, and they proceeded together to the library, where they found Lady Kingsbury, who had gained a prize in the last night's raffle, wavering between the articles from which she was entitled to select.

"What shall I take?" inquired she.

"That ink-stand," said Janet.

"Those views in Italy," advised Perceval.

"Those screens," urged Georgina.

The leading feature of each individual cha-

racter might be distinctly traced in these respective suggestions. Janet loved glitter—Mr. D'Esterre prided himself on possessing a refined and cultivated taste—while Georgina remembered how much on the preceding evening Lady Kingsbury, who was liable to flushings, had complained of the want of a fire-screen.

After a little deliberation (women can do nothing without deliberation) Mr. D'Esterre's advice was followed; they left the library and set out for a country ramble; Lady Kingsbury leant on Georgina's arm, while the other two, who walked separately, very soon contrived to fall behind, and so continued during the whole way, in spite of various looks and manœuvres on the part of Lady Kingsbury, to bring them into a less lover-like position — poor Lady Kingsbury had certainly two very impracticable nieces to deal with—one would not talk, and the other would not walk, according to her wishes.

That evening, Mrs. King Lewis, a lady long resident at Eastbeach, gave a ball. She was considered the great lady of the place—was on visiting terms with most of the neighbouring families—and, in consequence of being first cousin to the Duke of Cirencester, thought herself entitled to be fine and exclusive. At Eastbeach it was considered a great thing to be acquainted with Mrs. King Lewis—a greater still, to be invited to her balls and soirées. Lady Kingsbury and her nieces enjoyed both privileges, and, as Janet was to be amongst the guests, Mr. D'Esterre condescended to accept an invitation.

To those who stand aloof from scenes of dissipation, how puerile appear the motives that actuate her votaries—how false their estimate of things and individuals ! Because Mrs. King Lewis was cousin to the Duke of Cirencester, did it follow, she was amiable and sensible, or

her society worth seeking? No—she was a silly, insipid, vain and frivolous woman. In fact—people who ground their superiority solely on the advantages of wealth or station, rarely acknowledge the necessity of enforcing their assumption by other, and more worthy claims—they seek neither to be good nor intellectual—it is enough that they are great and rich : and a most uninteresting class of beings do they prove ; at any rate, in my opinion. I value worth—I venerate religion—I admire talent—and refinement both of mind and manners I can fully estimate—but rank and wealth, simply for their own sakes, are to me, nothing.

As, however, Eastbeach contained few moralizing lookers-on, Mrs. King Lewis was pronounced a very charming person, at least, by all she condescended to patronize ; and, as the ball in question was expected to be even beyond her usual entertainments, great had been the

anxiety to obtain tickets—numberless the new dresses ordered for the occasion. And now the lights, so visible in many an up-stair window, proclaim the anxious toilets that are carrying on.

“Janet, do you think any one will dance with me, to-night?” said Georgina, as she sat before the glass arranging her hair, “I almost hope Mr. Oswald will.”

“Mr. Oswald?”

“Yes. I thought he looked pleased when he heard we were going. And, you know, he danced twice with me the other evening.”

“Yes ; because I happened to want a vis-a-vis, and he saw you were disengaged. But, my dear Georgina, you surely do not expect, because a gentleman, to suit his own convenience happens to notice you once, that the same thing will occur again. But I see how it is ; you are falling into the mistake, so common to

country Misses, of fancying you have made a conquest of every man who pays you the most trifling civility."

"Oh, Janet——"

"It is a very common error; but you will soon be wiser. Stay, let me fasten that rosebud; you are putting it too low down."

Georgina gave the flower into her sister's hand, who placed it in the most unbecoming manner, while she thus continued: "Now I think of it, if Mr. D'Esterre should ask you to dance this evening, pray remember my aunt's advice and talk a little. You have no idea, Georgy, how prejudicial this invincible silence is to you. Mr. D'Esterre would hardly believe me, to-day, when I assured him you were really a sensible girl; he evidently thinks you deficient in intellect. So, indeed, you must make an effort, for my sake; I feel so anxious that *he* should think well of you. Besides, after all,

where is the difficulty? You cannot want a subject : music, Italian, literature, the fine arts—each, in its turn, presents a ready theme for conversation. And Perceval is so well informed on every subject, you will find him a delightful companion. But be careful to speak only of what you really understand, for he is rather inclined to be severe. Yes—” she pursued, as if considering the subject, “he is undoubtedly satirical, and I dare say could be ill-natured.”

“I should hardly have thought that ; Mr. D’Esterre may be fastidious, and, to say the truth, I’m dreadfully afraid of him : but he does not look ill-natured.”

“Never judge of people by their looks, Georgina—nor even by their words. The most ill-tempered persons often wear an almost perpetual smile, and, under a bland expression and insinuating manner, ill-nature is frequently concealed. This is constantly the case with men

where our sex is concerned. Indeed, some of them will go yet further, and adopt an appearance of admiring interest, for no other purpose in the world than to lead a woman on, until she makes herself ridiculous.”

“How shocking !” said Georgina.

“It is, nevertheless, not uncommon ; with women they are rarely sincere ; and as a proof—it was only this very afternoon, that after expressing himself so much delighted with your singing, and I dare say making you all sorts of fine speeches, no sooner had you left the room, than Mr. D’Esterre regretted to me you had not been better instructed.”

“Mr. D’Esterre did not pay me any compliments ;” replied Georgina, a little sharply, “and as it was only by accident he overheard me, I really think he might have spared his ill-natured criticisms. I certainly shall not give him an opportunity of repeating them.”

As Janet surmised, Mr. D'Esterre asked Georgina to dance ; and as Janet fully intended, during that dance, her sister was more than usually taciturn. The moment the quadrille concluded, she returned to Lady Kingsbury ; but Perceval would not be shaken off. On the contrary, he remained standing before them ; and as Lady Kingsbury was what is commonly called an agreeable person, that is to say, she could and did talk about everything and everybody, Georgina sat by in silence, feeling rather amused than otherwise, until supper was announced.

Mr. D'Esterre gave an arm to each lady, and, at table, placed himself between them. From this moment all Georgina's entertainment vanished : her aunt, like other chaperons, was endowed with a good appetite, and found some *paté de Perigord* infinitely more attractive than Mr. Perceval D'Esterre, who, naturally enough,

turned and addressed his young and lovely neighbour. Georgina would rather have been left in peace ; but afterwards reflecting it was very foolish to be afraid of any body, and still more of her future brother-in-law, she made a strong effort to shake off her uneasiness. She succeeded : after all, Perceval D'Esterre, whose voice was so melodious, his manner so urbane and smile so courtly, was not a very formidable person. Georgina soon found herself comparatively at her ease, and, by the time they left the table, had become interested in her companion.

After supper, he joined the group of girls who stood clustering round Miss Irving and her sister : and the former, immediately detaching herself from the rest, addressed him, as though confident she was alone the magnet of attraction.

They spoke of different places—Brighton, Cheltenham, Eastbeach, were all in turn dis-

cussed. Of the two first, Janet knew little, the last she abused unsparingly—it was vulgar, public, glaring—in short, everything a place should not be. D’Esterre smiled, and asked Georgina if she agreed in this opinion.

“I?” said Georgina, “oh no ; I am delighted with Eastbeach. But then, I could be happy anywhere : perhaps, because I have been so little away from home. If, like Janet, I had spent three seasons in town, I dare say I should be as fastidious as she is.”

“True,” replied Perceval, “three seasons in London, and we must become *blasés* in all our tastes and feelings. I envy you the freshness and simplicity of yours, Miss Berrington.”

“Are you certain that this readiness to receive pleasure arises wholly from inexperience ? Children, you know, praise daisies, and oyster-shells ; savage nations bedeck themselves with tinsel or glass beads—and so it is with us ; the mind

makes its own happiness : whilst over-refinement destroys the enjoyment of one person, another, under precisely similar circumstances, remains perfectly contented, simply, from want of discrimination," observed Miss Irving, not particularly pleased by Perceval's remark on her "three London seasons."

"Well," answered Georgina, "as oyster-shells and daisies are more easily obtained than pearls and camellias, I will not quarrel with my power of being easily amused, although it may appear to you to spring from want of taste."

"If you did, you would depreciate one of the greatest and most enviable blessings—a contented disposition," rejoined Mr. D'Esterre.

"A contented disposition is, of course, greatly to be admired," said Janet sententially. "I question, however, whether those persons who, let surrounding circumstances be what they may, are always happy—always in good spirits,

do not, in some respects, display a deficiency of feeling."

"Janet, you mistake my meaning; I said, I could be happy any where, not under any circumstances. I could not be happy under any circumstances—far from it—I could not be happy if I saw suffering—if I knew that those I loved were less happy than myself. Their presence, too, would be necessary to my enjoyment: and that," she added, observing something like a cloud on Janet's brow, "is one reason why I am so partial to Eastbeach."

"Miss Berrington," said Perceval, after a brief silence, "they are going to waltz. May I request the favour of your hand?"

"Thank you, I do not waltz."

"Why? Because papa disapproves of waltzing? Or because you will not join in a dance about which there are two opinions?"

"I do not know that papa disapproves of

waltzing—nor have I ever thought much about it myself.”

“Then think now, and let your thoughts favour my request.”

“I cannot, the motion makes me giddy.”

“Oh, that will soon pass off—try a few turns, we will stop the instant you feel tired.”

“No, no, I am confident my head would be turned with the very first bar.”

“It would be something to turn that head,” murmured Perceval, in so low a tone of voice, that Georgina, terrified lest, *bon grè* or *malgré*, she should be led to join the waltzers, did not hear him; but Janet did—she saw, too, the admiring glance he, at the same time, cast towards her sister’s classic head and throat—and, forthwith, she made an excursion to that side of the room where Lady Kingsbury was sitting.

“Georgina,” she said, on coming back; “my

aunt is exceedingly fatigued, and, unless you wish particularly to remain, is anxious to return home."

"Oh, no; I am quite ready to go," replied Georgina, glad to see the waltzing question thus disposed of.

Mr. D' Esterre handed Georgina to the carriage; and perhaps he would not have declined a seat therein had one been offered. But Lady Kingsbury, coldly, bade him good night, and then, turning towards Miss Irving, said, with some earnestness—

"Janet, an end must be put to this—Mr. D' Esterre must find some one else to amuse himself with."

"Mr. D' Esterre?"

"Yes, Mr. D' Esterre. I have always doubted his sincerity, and now it is quite clear he has never been in earnest. Indeed I am much mistaken, if he does not mean to play the same game

with Georgy, he has done with you. But I shall, certainly, interfere. I will *not* suffer both my nieces to be made fools of, by this vain young man—and so I shall give Mr. D' Esterre to understand, if he shows the slightest inclination to repeat his ridiculous behaviour of this evening."

"Pray, my dear aunt, do not. I entreat you will take no step which might annoy Mr. D' Esterre. I have the most perfect confidence in his honourable and upright feelings."

"Well," replied Lady Kingsbury, "you are old enough, I suppose, to judge for yourself—but people see things differently: in my opinion, Mr. D'Esterre is not in earnest; and by suffering him to dangle after you, you will only get the name of a forsaken, lovelorn damsel. Remember, Janet, there can be no greater disadvantage to a girl than to have it supposed her affections have been trifled with.

No man likes to venture on a woman thus circumstanced."

"I apprehend no danger of being condemned to wear the willow. Perceval is a highly principled man, who would scorn conduct so mean and paltry. His sincerity——"

"Sincerity!——why, child, he scarcely spoke to you the whole evening, and attached himself so closely to Georgina that it was impossible to shake him off. Quite troublesome, wasn't he, Georgy? I'm sure, I thought we should never have got rid of him."

"As to Mr. D'Esterre's not publicly devoting himself to me, it is nothing uncommon. No man shews the object of *serious* attachment much and marked attention before strangers—and with regard to his dancing with Georgina, I can look upon it in no other light than an indirect and delicate compliment to me——had he chosen any other woman in the room, I

might have felt uneasy—but my own sister—”

“Well,” said Lady Kingsbury, “as you will, Janet, as you will; only remember, I am not satisfied.” And Lady Kingsbury descended the carriage steps still speaking; but of her discourse Miss Irving only caught the words——“never marry—” and “my niece, Eliza Fitzgrove.”

“Georgina,” said she, while preparing to follow—“I see you are resolved to profit by my advice, and succeed to admiration. *Je vous en fais mon compliment.* You have quite established your character for wit—and may next aspire to be a *bas-bleu* or *belle esprit*.”

Georgina hardly knew whether her sister had spoken ironically or not——whether she intended encouragement or blame; still, she felt uncomfortable—and she began undressing in a frame of mind very foreign to that in which a triumphant beauty usually divests herself of

all the aids and adjuncts of her ball-room charms.

The diplomatic Janet observed this, and, fearful of losing her influence, by offending her sister, selected from her well filled trinket box a pair of pearl and turquoise ear-rings.

“Wear these for my sake, dearest Georgina, they are so becoming to you,” she said; holding the ornaments in such a manner as to show their full effect.

In a transport of gratitude, Georgina threw her arms round Janet’s neck. The ear-rings were badly set and old-fashioned—but of that she was not aware.

Before she fell asleep that night, Georgina came to the conclusion that men are most deceitful creatures; for she remembered that, more than once in the course of the evening, Mr. D’Esterre had alluded to her singing in terms of marked approval—and yet—to Janet, he had criticised it.

Are there many Janet Irvings in the world? I fear me, not a few—Envy is a plant of very common growth; it is, alas! the moral Upas tree of the domestic hearth, whose poisonous influence separates young hearts that should have loved, and grown together.

Sister, too often, envies sister—and brother brother. Cain envied Abel—and he smote, and slew him—the Patriarchs were moved with envy, and sold their brother for a slave.

Is the picture too highly coloured?—Alas!—no; the mind, this despicable passion sways, shrinks from no littleness—resorts to every artifice, to serve its purpose. Falsehood, detraction, calumny—these are the weapons envy loves to wield: and the wounds they leave are rarely healed without a scar; for, while the covetous man seeks to defraud us of our wealth, or the ambitious thrusts us on one side, that he may sieze the prize we sought to grasp—the

envious spirit strikes at our happiness and peace of mind—our reputation, or good name. It is possible to replace wealth—ambition's loss is often a real gain ; but with our perished happiness we lose our power of enjoyment ; and a reputation sullied is, alas, a reputation lost.

There is a sort of stern nobility in pride, to which we yield involuntary homage—ambition too, even while it startles, fascinates and thralls, for in both we see the towering offspring of a lofty heart : but Envy is a mean and grovelling feeling, which springs, like avarice, from a little mind. Twin sisters also—for, though the miser is not always envious, you will seldom find a disposition in which envy forms a striking feature, free from the love of gold.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day, there was storm without, and gloom within. . Lady Kingsbury professed a head-ache, and gave directions that no visitors should be admitted; Georgina was occupied in the disagreeable task of writing home for money; and Janet, more studiously dressed than usual, placed herself at the window, and watched the shifting clouds. Presently a knock at the door was heard, and, shortly after, the servant appeared, bearing in his hand Mr. D'Esterre's card.

“Mr. D’Esterre!” cried Lady Kingsbury, looking exceedingly irate. “Did I not give you orders to admit no one?”

“Yes, my Lady, but I thought—”

“In future, I must beg you will be kind enough not to think, but to obey my orders.”

“Am I to say your Ladyship is not at home?”

“No; as he has thought proper to send up his card, I suppose we must admit him; though, I must say, I think he might have—”

What Mr. D’Esterre might have done remains a secret, for his entrance cut short Lady Kingsbury’s speech—he was on the point of leaving Eastbeach, and came to make a formal farewell call. He addressed his conversation almost exclusively to Lady Kingsbury, and, when the brief visit was concluded, slightly touched the hands of both her young companions, and expressed a hope that they might meet in London.

There could be no doubt, whatever, that Miss Irving had deceived herself.

The door closed on this provoking gentleman—Lady Kingsbury looked at Janet, and her glance said, most expressively, “there, you see that I was right.” Then, placing herself at the window, she began to hum a tune; her Ladyship’s custom, when very much put out. In silence, Georgina folded and sealed her letter, while her sister appeared to have found something unusually interesting among the advertisements of the Morning Post; until another peal at the street door announced a fresh intruder, when she quickly vanished from the apartment.

“Very tiresome indeed!” cried Lady Kingsbury; “who can this be now? Mr. D’Esterre, I suppose, come back to see whether you are not both in hysterics. And I declare Robert is—”

“Mrs. Greenwood,” said the domestic.

“What brings that stupid woman here again? She was here only the day before yesterday—Robert must be mad to let her in. I shall certainly discharge him.”

“Ah, my dear Mrs. Greenwood, how are you—delighted to see you, pray take a seat. Miss Greenwood, I hope you are not the worse for your dissipation last night—you danced a great deal, I know ; a very pleasant, and well-conducted party it was.”

“My daughter never dances much ;” (the poor girl had not stirred a step.) “She is delicate, and unequal to exertion. Besides, I am particular, very particular, about the acquaintances she forms,” replied Mrs. Greenwood ; who, seeing Lady Kingsbury at the window, had fought her way in ; being actuated by the two-fold wish of escaping a threatened shower of rain, and of ascertaining the precise terms

on which Miss Irving and Mr. D'Esterre stood, with regard to each other.

"You are right—it is impossible to be too cautious in that respect."

"I don't see Miss Irving," said Mrs. Greenwood, looking round the room. Then, with an expression of mysterious sympathy, "I hope she is quite herself to day?"

"Perfectly;" quickly rejoined Lady Kingsbury; "Janet is perfectly well. She was here but a minute since, and is now, I believe, preparing for a walk: the weather seemed inclined to clear, and she wished to take advantage of it. My girls are great walkers. Does Miss Greenwood walk much?"

"A great deal, but never alone. I disapprove of young people wandering about without a proper escort—the young men of our day have become so unprincipled and selfish, they really seem to think women are created for no

other purpose than their amusement, and therefore, in my opinion, it is the duty of every mother to keep her daughter continually under her own eye. It is impossible to calculate the mischief she may thus avert."

"True, very true," observed Lady Kingsbury; all the time wishing her visiter at the bottom of the sea.

Georgina, meanwhile, underwent the usual visiting routine of question and reply.

"Did she like Eastbeach? Had she been there long? How much longer would she stay? Were they going to the ball on Monday?"

"Did she bathe? Had she heard of the shocking accident that had happened to Mrs. Smithson's youngest child?"

The latter was new to Georgina—and Miss Greenwood proceeded to inform her "that five of the little Smithsons, with two of their nursemaids, being in a machine, one fine day—no, it

wasn't a fine day—for the sea was rough, extremely rough. Well—they had been bathing, and the man drove off without making the usual signal—very wrong indeed, exceedingly careless—but those machine boys never think of anything. The nurse-maid lost her footing and fell against the back door, which gave way, and she was so dreadfully frightened that, in her anxiety to escape a bath—she dropped the child she was holding in her arms into the sea; and as they could not make the driver hear, the poor infant ran no small chance of being washed away.”

“How very terrible!” said Georgina, “was it drowned?”

“No—they did contrive, at last, to stop the machine, and the bathing woman found the child, and brought it back. Are you fond of babies, Miss Berrington?”

“Not very. I like children when they are old

enough to walk about, and ask questions; but I can't say I am particularly fond of babies."

"Nor I—I think it is very vulgar to like babies—just like the servants and common people, you know."

At this moment, Georgina's attention was caught, by hearing Mrs. Greenwood exclaim, in a tone between doubt and astonishment,—

"You do indeed surprise me;—so he has been refused—well, I must acknowledge, I cannot sympathise with him—so dreadfully conceited, and gave himself such airs. He wished to make our acquaintance, and desired an introduction to Maria—but, I threw cold water upon it. Such young men are dangerous associates for girls—and it is really quite at an end?"

"Entirely. In future, my niece, and Mr. D'Esterre will meet only as acquaintances."

"La," said Miss Greenwood, who had also heard these last sentences, "has Miss Irving

refused Mr. D'Esterre? That's the strangest thing I ever knew. Why they say he is quite a lady killer—and has broken the hearts of at least fifteen girls, already. Only think of his having been refused at last—I'm so glad."

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Greenwood, burning with impatience to be off.

"I must entreat your secrecy," observed Lady Kingsbury, in a low voice, and her most friendly manner—"you know it is a point of honour to conceal these matters. On no account, would Janet have it generally known—but between friends—"

"I will not breathe a word of it. Maria, your parasol—good morning, my dear Miss Berrington—my kind regards to your sister—hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting her on the esplanade. It promises to be a lovely afternoon."

"Where shall we go now?" inquired Miss Greenwood, as they left the house.

“To Mrs. King Lewis’s: I would not for the world she should hear the news from any one but me.”

“What news?”

“Why, that this coxcomb has been refused.”

“But Lady Kingsbury begged us not to mention it.”

“Oh, that was a mere form, words of course. Here, take my arm—and pray don’t shuffle so in walking—nothing is more inelegant,” said Mrs. Greenwood, much out of humour with her daughter, because no one had asked her to dance, on the foregoing night.

They proceeded for a short distance in silence, and then Maria, herself a pale girl, with a long red nose, observed—

“I wonder what makes Miss Irving so popular? She certainly is not very handsome.”

“I think her almost plain; small, insignificant features, and very little expression.”

“ I suppose, she has a large fortune.”

“ They say, fifteen thousand pounds—but, I don’t believe she has half as much. However, the reputation of having it goes some way.”

“ Oh yes—people think of nothing but money. And, then, Lady Kingsbury is such an excellent chaperone—I dare say, too, that Miss Irving’s having been introduced in town is a great advantage to her—people in the country always think so much of a London girl. Besides, Lady Kingsbury’s having a carriage goes a great way in getting her nieces partners ; I am sure, half the gentlemen who ask them to dance, only do it because they hope to be taken home after the ball.”

“ Yes ; Miss Irving has some advantages which other girls have not : and she is sensible enough to make the most of them—in which respect, Maria, I wish you would follow her example—I do as much for you, as Lady Kings-

bury does for her nieces, but it is of little use; you never think of seconding me."

"Dear mama, I'm sure I always try—I do every thing I can."

"Even now, with regard to Mr. D'Esterre—although you know how much I have done to bring about an acquaintance—so far from assisting my endeavours, you chose to return home the other evening, although Colonel Stafford had positively engaged to introduce you."

"If he had, it could have led to nothing; Mr. D'Esterre is so much in love with Miss Irving, he would never think of anybody else."

"I did not expect Mr. D'Esterre to fall in love with you; but he is a young man much looked up to, and considered in the world: and it is always an advantage to a girl to know such persons, even should the acquaintance never go beyond a bow."

"But, mama, my head ached to such a degree,

I really could not remain ; the room seemed to be swimming round and round—I thought I should have fainted.”

“ My dear Maria, these ailments of yours are very inconvenient. I wish you would learn to think less about them. If you were really ill, it would be quite another thing—but, indeed, a headache is such a trifle—nobody else would ever think about it. Besides, it is very foolish to be always complaining. Pray guard against the habit ; nothing is more prejudicial to a young woman than the notion that her health is bad ; few men will venture on a sickly wife.”

At this very moment, poor Maria’s head ached violently ; and when, after a long visit, they left Mrs. King Lewis’s heated room, crowded with idlers like themselves, she would gladly have returned home and laid it on her pillow ; but, afraid of vexing her judicious mother, she said nothing of her suffering.

Two years afterwards, Maria became a decided invalid—her complaint was in its nature trifling, and would easily have yielded to wise and early treatment; but concealment and neglect have aggravated symptoms which now threaten to prove permanent.—Her fate is no uncommon one.

CHAPTER X.

Two hours after the termination of Mrs. Greenwood's visit to Lady Kingsbury, all Eastbeach knew that Miss Irving had refused Mr. D'Esterre : the report was not, perhaps, generally believed—but it was widely circulated, and, in fact, reached farther than its author either wished or intended.

“ Georgina,” said Lady Kingsbury, when Mrs. Greenwood had taken her departure, “ the weather will not admit of my walking ; but you

and Janet will do well to shew yourselves on the Esplanade ; at least, if your sister be capable of such an exertion. Where is she ?”

“ Janet is above stairs, I believe.”

“ Pray go and tell her what I say.”

Georgina, still all astonishment at the mistake into which Lady Kingsbury had suffered her visiter to fall, ran hastily up stairs. Janet was lying down.

“ Who is that ?” she said, peevishly turning her face towards the wall.

“ Oh, I have disturbed you—how grieved I am. My dear, dear Janet, can I do nothing for you ?” And Georgy gently took her sister’s hand in hers.

“ No ;” replied Miss Irving, quickly withdrawing it. “ I want nothing.”

“ But were you asleep ?”

“ No ; it were little less than a miracle to sleep with all this talking in the room below. By the way, who has been here ?”

“Mrs. Greenwood and her daughter.”

“Odious people! what did they come for?”

“Indeed, I can’t tell; but do you know, Janet, there has been the most unfortunate mistake about you and Mr. D’Esterre.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Janet, starting. “A mistake? How—what? Tell me every thing that passed.”

Georgina complied; and ended by asking the best mode of correcting the error, which she persisted must have been accidental. To her amazement, Janet burst into a fit of laughter.

“My dear Janet,” asked the astonished girl, “what are you laughing at? What is it that amuses you so very much?”

“Lady Kingsbury’s ready wit, and quick invention, I never gave her credit for so much talent before.”

“Indeed, Janet, I see neither wit nor talent in the business. Mrs. Greenwood was stupid

enough to fancy you had refused Mr. D'Esterre, and my aunt, from inattention, or absence of mind, suffered her to leave the house without correcting the mistake. Nor indeed did I, they hurried off so fast. But, you know, it must be done."

"I see no necessity for that."

"Nay, my dear Janet, if Mrs. Greenwood goes about telling every body that you have rejected Mr. D'Esterre, as I have no doubt she will—and we do not contradict the report, will it not be conniving at a falsehood?"

"No, my dear literal sister; for it is not a falsehood."

"Janet," said Georgina, opening her eyes, "do you mean to say that Mr. D'Esterre *did* ask you to marry him?"

"Not in those precise words, perhaps; still, without risking our characters for veracity, we may safely suffer Mrs. Greenwood to proceed in her career."

“ I cannot understand you.”

“ Georgy, has it never occurred to you that if a woman apprehended a proposal she did not intend accepting, she would take measures to prevent it?”

“ Oh yes ; but surely, Janet, that has not been your case. Did you discourage Mr. D'Esterre?”

“ It requires little to enable a man of D'Esterre's tact and discrimination to perceive that further attempts would be useless. Without wounding his feelings, I have made him plainly understand that more than friends we never can be. Unless, indeed, Georgy, you take pity on him—you know, it is not by any means uncommon for a man who has been refused by one sister, to offer to another.”

“ But I thought you liked him. What could have induced you to do this? Janet, you surely liked him.”

“Georgy,” said Miss Irving, after a minute’s pause, “I will be frank with you. You must have remarked that my aunt’s great affection for me makes her anxious, too anxious, to see me well married.”

“Oh, yes, no one can help observing that.”

Miss Irving bit her lip.

“It is a very common feeling, this of Lady Kingsbury’s—one, I believe, all parents entertain, and she has been to me quite like a mother.”

“But what has this to do with your refusing Mr. D’Esterre?”

“You shall hear. When first I knew him, he appeared to unite much that is both attractive and eligible; that is to say, he is handsome, rich, well-born, and so on; and, knowing my aunt’s anxiety on the subject, I encouraged Mr. D’Esterre’s attentions, and my predilections in his favour, which latter, would in time,

I thought, reach that degree of preference every woman should entertain for the man she marries; but a further acquaintance has not strengthened my partiality; on the contrary, some trifling shades of character have betrayed themselves, at which my sensitive and very fastidious feelings took alarm, and I resolved to put an end to the affair at once, by making Mr. D'Esterre understand that any idea of a nearer intimacy was out of the question."

"And when did you do this?"

"Yesterday, during our walk. I was, therefore, quite prepared for what Lady Kingsbury chose to consider his inconstancy."

"Poor Mr. D'Esterre, he must have been very much disappointed."

"Men do not feel these things as we do, Georgy—their vanity may suffer, perhaps; but nothing further. In fact, I believe, very few men know what it is to feel at all."

“But why, Janet, did you not explain all this to my aunt, last night?”

“Because I knew it would vex her ; and, for the same reason, you, dearest Georgina, will be equally silent. Besides, I wished to spare Mr. D’Esterre any further mortification on the subject ; you remember how anxiously I endeavoured to prevent any change in my aunt’s manner towards him.”

Georgina was so astonished at all she heard that she quite forgot to deliver her aunt’s message to Miss Irving, until the sound of that lady’s voice upon the stairs recalled it to her remembrance.

“I believe my aunt is right,” said Janet, rising from the bed. “The heat of the room last night has given me a head-ache ; and the fresh air may, perhaps, remove it.”

The out of doors toilet was speedily completed, and, in a few minutes they were walk-

ing on the Esplanade; Georgina looking graver—Janet, more gay, than usual: her animated conversation with Colonel Stafford only interrupted by the ready smile, or lively remark, with which she greeted the passing acquaintances. And people little thought how much there lay beneath that sparkling smile—that witty repartee.

For years, Janet's whole life had been one long deceit; it cost her, therefore, little or no effort to conceal her present feelings: her spirits were as high as though there had been no Perceval D'Esterre in existence; and, excepting that her manner towards Lady Kingsbury became more deferential, and towards Georgina more caressing, it exhibited no change; Georgina was completely puzzled (for the frank and guileless are always the readiest dupes), and Lady Kingsbury entirely misled. As far as concerned the latter, it had

been better had Janet shewn more openness ; for, believing Miss Irving's peace of mind still unimpaired, Lady Kingsbury felt no hesitation in speaking on the subject ; indeed, it seemed as if she never could exhaust it ; and for days, even weeks, Mr. D'Esterre's duplicity and her niece's folly furnished her with a never-ceasing theme of conversation.

“ Well, Georgy, what news ? How is your father ? ” inquired Lady Kingsbury, one morning, not long after Mr. D'Esterre's departure, when Georgina had received a letter from home, which she perused with a somewhat blank expression of countenance.

“ Thank you, papa is quite well ; at least, as well as he ever is. But—but he wishes me to go back.”

“ Indeed ! I did not expect so sudden a recal. I reckoned on your staying at least a month longer. Why does your father send for you in such a hurry ? ”

“Papa says, he thinks I have been away a long time : and that you, my dear aunt, must be as tired of my company as he is of my absence.”

But Lady Kingsbury was not in the least tired of Georgina's society ; on the contrary, she was really sorry to lose a useful, obliging companion ; and, anxious to detain her, offered many tempting suggestions ; amongst the rest, an invitation to Major Berrington to join them there. Georgina, however, was satisfied this would never suit her father ; and Lady Kingsbury, finding her efforts ineffectual, at length consented to her return ; at the same time, kindly enough insisting that her own maid should accompany her. Accordingly, Georgina and Mrs. Turner were packed into a post-chaise, and, without meeting with an adventure, or even the shadow of one, arrived at Atherley.

It were false and unnatural to say Georgina returned to Atherley precisely the same being she left it. In heart and affections, she was, it is true, unchanged; but her tastes and opinions had undergone much alteration. The slight glimpse she had obtained of the gay world was just enough to dazzle and enchant; while the inconvenient, melancholy Grange, with its dingy rooms, its creaking doors, damp walls, and smoky chimnies, formed but a sorry contrast with the lively, cheerful residence she had lately left. Georgina felt the want of a thousand things she had never missed before — caught a severe cold the evening of her arrival — and found it necessary to make a strong effort ere she could prevail upon herself to swallow the ill-cooked, greasy dinner, not rendered more tempting by being served upon a very spotty table-cloth.

One of the most trying consequences of a

narrow income is that want of entire cleanliness, almost inseparable from poverty. It is all very well to talk of linen being coarse, yet rivalling the drifted snow; of neat-handed Phillis's, whose cheerfulness and ready dexterity forestall your wants, and convert the simple viands that they place before you into a feast an epicure might envy.

Alas! good reader, such are met with but in books; exist but in the poet's fanciful imagination. In real life *c'est bien autre chose*; for washing (I am sorry to allude to such vulgarities,) is expensive; those, therefore, who cannot afford to keep a laundress, or pay a heavy weekly bill, must be content to have their table linen somewhat more than coarse; and persons who have not a proper complement of servants should not be too fastidious in their food.

Autumn was far advanced—the sullen wind

murmured the dirge of the departing year, and softly wafted to their mother earth the parched and rustling leaves : the sky was veiled in mist and cloud, and those few flowers that still remained were little prized ; they were not linked with thoughts of joy or pleasure — neither spring's harbingers were they, nor summer's gorgeous crown—but they were like that sad and sickly smile that sometimes gleams athwart the countenance of age, when the wild dream of youth flits back upon the soul, and we forget what we now are, in thought of what we have been.

All was desolation without, and parsimonious discomfort within. After the first burst of pleasure, with which he greeted his daughter, had subsided, Major Berrington became gloomy and desponding, occasionally morose. His time was principally spent in writing, always to him a painful, wearying exertion ; and, when

forced by the increasing dimness of his vision, to lay by his pen, he would seat himself before the cheerless, sparingly supplied fire—and, in spite of all Georgina's efforts to amuse or entertain him, remain for hours plunged in a gloomy reverie.

Alas! the poor man had abundant food for bitter meditation. On selling his commission, tempted by a somewhat higher rate of interest than is usual, he had been induced to lend part of the purchase money on a mortgage, which now proved insecure. And thus, not only was a portion of his little wealth endangered, but his income materially diminished, precisely at a moment when his expenses had been unavoidably increased; and, to augment his difficulties, it happened that one of his old creditors, who had been hitherto perfectly satisfied with the mere interest of his money, being himself in want of a few ready hundreds, called for a

measure of the principal. Christmas, also, was near at hand, tradesmen's accounts would be pouring in ; and, to crown all, his landlord refused to make a few absolutely necessary repairs, unless the house-rent were proportionably raised.

No wonder Major Berrington looked grave, and took small interest in Georgina's glowing picture of Eastbeach and its delights—no wonder, either, that, under so many combined *gloominesses*, she found her present life extremely dull, flat, stale, and unprofitable.

CHAPTER XI.

DISMAL as was the Grange, the Cottage, where dwelt Miss Rocket and the five Miss Arnolds, was hardly more enlivening; for, during Georgy's absence, Captain Slycer had "left his love for gold," and Belinda wore the willow. This young lady belonged to the romantic school: she was remarkable for forming friendships, more warm than lasting—fancied herself in love with every single man she chanced to meet—and, on the present occasion, chose to

enact the broken-hearted. Accordingly, she wandered about alone, read sentimental books, and wrote sentimental verses, sat up half the night apostrophising the moon (starving was also tried, but, being blessed with a good appetite, the experiment proved unpleasant, and was given up), maintained a perpetuity of sighs, warbled soft ditties, and talked about her base betrayer, until she nearly drove her aunt and sisters frantic.

“What news?” said Rebecca, who was in the habit of paying a daily visit at the Grange, “what news from your landlord?”

“None,” replied Major Berrington. “I had no letters by this day’s post.”

“Which, according to the old adage (there is a great deal of truth in these old adages), means, good. You will stay here on your own terms.”

“I fear that, in this instance, the maxim will

not prove correct. When a man means to meet your wishes, he loses no time in telling you so; it is only when he intends a refusal that there is delay. All shrink from doing what is disagreeable; and few persons are so thoroughly unamiable but that they would rather grant than refuse a favour."

"Then, if Mr. Cromwell finds it unpleasant to refuse, he will, of course, consent, and you are still secure."

"You forget the temptation of an additional ten or fifteen pounds a year."

"Ten or fifteen pounds a year! What can ten or fifteen pounds a year be to a man of his wealth? Why, I understand that, in addition to the money he inherited from his uncle, he cleared, at least, five thousand pounds last year, merely by that malting business."

"Ah, Rebecca, but people who clear five thousand a year are exactly the persons who

look sharp after every ten or fifteen pounds ; and, as such is the way of the world, I must make up my mind to expect nothing better. Still, it would cost me something to be obliged to leave this old familiar place, which has, indeed, become almost a portion of myself ; and this I must hold myself prepared to do."

"Perhaps not ; at any rate, we must not anticipate evil ; rather, my dear friend, look to the blessings and comforts that still remain ; and, let me tell you, it's no trifling one to have such a girl as Georgy for a daughter. Come here, my dear," said Rebecca to Georgina, who then entered the room, "I've just been telling your papa what a good thing it is you have come back heart-whole, like a sensible, well-conducted girl, instead of making a fool of yourself, like my niece Belinda. She puts me out of all patience ; I declare, the way she's going on is enough to make one mad ; nor can

I, for the life of me, imagine what has made her so ridiculous. The other girls are sensible enough; I suppose it is those trashy love stories she is so fond of reading; certainly, they are enough to turn any girl's head; and, if I had my will, not one of them should come into my house. An old friend of mine used to say that most romances were like Pandora's box, full of all manner of evil. And poetry is not much better."

"Oh, indeed!" cried Georgina, "you must not speak in that way. When I was at East-beach, I read a great deal of poetry, and I have never been more amused with any thing."

"Might not your time have been better employed, Georgina?"

"Ah, that was what Lady Kingsbury used to say: yet she never thought walking and driving about, or paying visits, loss of time; and that was the manner in which almost

every body passed the afternoon at Eastbeach ; and Janet tells me that in London it is just the same ; visitors received at home until three ; then, the carriage ordered, the afternoon spent in leaving cards at people's houses, in shopping, or driving in the Park until it is time to come in to dinner. Now, I am sure that is losing time, and losing it very disagreeably too."

"There is no doubt of it, Georgina," said Major Berrington, smiling at his daughter's warmth.

"Very true," replied Rebecca ; "but it is no excuse for doing one wrong or foolish thing that another is just as absurd or blameable."

"And yet it is thus the majority of persons defend themselves," observed Georgina's father.

"Well," retorted Miss Rocket, returning to her original grievance ; "I wish some one would persuade Belinda to conduct herself in a more sensible manner."

“ We must make some allowances for her ; Captain Slycer has behaved infamously.”

“ Yes ; he has proved himself to be a sorry knave. But I tell my niece that, instead of breaking her heart for so good-for-nothing a fellow, she ought to be glad he shewed himself in his true colours before it was too late. Besides, notwithstanding all the piece of work she’s making, between ourselves, I don’t believe Belinda cared one atom for the man himself ; like other silly girls, she thought it a fine thing to be married, but nothing more. But Georgy, how does it happen you have escaped so well amongst all the fine gentleman you must have met at Eastbeach ?” concluded Miss Rocket, who had half a suspicion Georgina was not altogether insensible to Maurice’s affection.

“ Indeed,” replied Georgina, laughing, “ nobody seemed to think my heart worth trying for. And if any one had, I doubt whether it

would have been of any avail. I sometimes think I am not worth a heart."

"Because at seventeen you have not yet contrived to lose it."

"I shall be eighteen, in a few days," replied Georgina, with a slight touch of offended dignity: for girls of her age are usually very tenacious of being allowed their full complement of years.

"I trust," observed Major Berrington in a tone of sadness, "you may never learn by bitter experience, that you are as weak, and fond, and affectionate, as other women."

"Pooh!" retorted Miss Rocket. "Women are not one bit more apt to fall in love than men. It's nothing but your vanity that makes you think so."

"You are not more apt, nor even so apt, to fall in love as we are; but where the affections are engaged, it becomes a far more serious

business with you than with us. Man's love is but a fancy—light and transitory as all fancies are,—women's is a feeling—deep, strong, abiding—which he who trifles with is, in my opinion, a most despicable wretch.”

“No woman of sense would let herself be trifled with. At any rate, I should like to see the man who could make a fool of me.” (And Rebecca drew herself up with maiden dignity.) “You need’nt laugh, Georgina; *I* have had my admirers as well as other people.”

“Oh yes; I know you have,” replied Georgina, dreading the repetition of a certain passage in Miss Rocket's earlier life, wherewith she was fond of edifying the younger members of the family.

“Well then, I hope you will act as prudently. I have never had occasion to regret it, I assure you. It's better to be an old maid without encumbrances, or anxieties, and my own mis-

tress, than a poor, pining, drooping wife—with ten children, and a cross, sick husband.—Besides—an improvident marriage is not only foolish, it is absolutely wicked.”)Major Berrington uttered a sigh, which Rebecca, in her excitement, did not hear.) “We are not to think only of ourselves. For my part, I’ve no patience with persons who marry for their own gratification, and then expect other people to provide for their families. But what have we here?—a letter by the cross post—a double letter—good news, I warrant.”

Major Berrington thought otherwise; such an accumulation of trouble had come upon him latterly, he felt as though it were impossible anything but evil could befall; and his hand trembled so violently it was with difficulty he broke the seal.

“Goodness! what has happened? What can it be? Major, Major, you are mad?” cried

Rebecca, seizing the open letter which had fallen to the ground ; while Major Berrington, with tearful eyes, and clasped hands, uttered an expression of fervent gratitude.

“ Well,” said Miss Rocket, after running her eye over the writing, Georgina, you *are* a lucky girl—six thousand a year—a place in ——shire ; a jointure of twelve hundred, in addition to whatever your father will give ; such a handsome man too ; didn’t I hear you tell my girls that Mr. D’Esterre was the handsomest man in Eastbeach ?”

“ No ;” said Georgina, replying to the only portion of Miss Rocket’s speech she could in any measure comprehend. “ Mr. D’Esterre was not the handsomest man in Eastbeach. There were Colonel Stafford, and Mr. Oswald, who were both reckoned handsomer ; but he was the most elegant looking.”

“ Ah, well, in future, Georgy, he must be

your handsomest man, everywhere. There, read your letter. Major, say, am I not a true prophetess? No fear of creditors, no leaving Atherley ; with your daughter so well married, you will never feel the want of money. I wish you joy—I wish you joy with all my heart.” And, carried away by the ecstasy of her feelings, the kind-hearted Rebecca suddenly threw her arms around the neck of the astonished Major Berrington, and imprinted a most sonorous kiss upon his wrinkled forehead.

Georgina was in a state of complete bewilderment. Twice she read the letter Miss Rocket had put into her hands without comprehending the exact intention of the writer. The third time she was more successful ; assisted by Rebecca’s commentary, she understood, at length, that her despatch contained neither more nor less than a formal offer of Perceval D’Esterre’s much sought-for hand.

And when she succeeded in rousing herself from the almost painful reverie to which so strange a circumstance had given rise, it was to perceive, from the discourse between Rebecca and her father, not only that her acceptance of the proposal was not questioned for a moment, but that it involved her parent's welfare, his happiness, almost his personal safety.

"You must lose no time in answering these letters;" said Miss Rocket. "You see Mr. D'Esterre has mistaken our post town, and so lost a day. Write at once; a few lines will do, you know; and I can put the letters in the post on my way home. Georgy, you're the luckiest girl I ever knew or heard of."

"Do you think," asked Georgina, timidly, "that Mr. D'Esterre can be attached to me?"

"To be sure I do. Why else should he wish to marry you?"

"Indeed I can't tell: but—but—but I used

to think—he always seemed to admire Janet more than me.”

“ All a blind, my dear ; rely upon it ; nothing but a blind. It’s a very common trick with men to pay a great deal of attention to a woman they don’t care a straw about, and very little to the girl they really love.”

“ That appears to me neither altogether honourable towards the one, nor flattering towards the other.”

“ As for flattery, the days are past when a man used to sigh, and pine, and so on ; he thinks it quite enough, now, to tell a girl of the honour he intends her, and we mus’nt expect more ; especially, when a gentleman of Mr. D’Esterre’s fortune and family takes it into his head to marry a girl without a shilling. So don’t quarrel with him for his want of devotedness ; remember, that the less love-making before, the more there will be, after, marriage.

As for your sister, I'll be bound he knew well enough what he was about ; and that she was no more likely to fall in love with him than he with her."

" But," replied Georgina in a low tone, " I know so little of Mr. D'Esterre, I really do not care for him."

" That will come, all in good time ; but come, begin your letter ; what do you mean to say ? The Major must have nearly finished his." Georgina glanced towards her father, who was seated at a writing table at the further end of the room ; her reluctance gave way, and, under Rebecca's dictation, she completed the customary answer.

No time was there for reflection on that day, nor even on the following ; for Rebecca spread the news, and the Miss Arnolds, Mrs. Tremlett, Mrs. Smith, Miss White, and every other Mistress and Miss who visited at the Grange called

to congratulate the Major, and see how Miss Berrington was looking.

On the third, came a letter from Perceval, thanking Georgina for the honour she had done him.

“The honour I have done him;” thought she, “then, surely, he must love me, or he never would consider it an *honour* to marry me.”

And, from that moment, Georgina began to be in love. Georgina, who was not worth a heart to give to any one! But, after all, perhaps it was not very singular. Mr. D’Esterre was young, handsome, agreeable, admired by every one; the homage he tendered her, others, in every way superior, would gladly have accepted; the wealth he offered, seemed unbounded; and, above all, he was the first man who had professed to love her.

“Poor Maurice! how dreadfully cut up he

will be by this," thought Charlotte Arnold, as she walked along the road which led from Atherley to Marston. He was expected to ride over and spend that afternoon at home. They met; in an instant Maurice was off his horse, the reins over one arm, his sister leaning on the other. A slender roll of music paper projected from his bosom. Charlotte knew for whom it was intended, and she felt her task more difficult.

"Well," he cried gaily, "what news, Charlotte? What has happened since I have been away? Has Belinda found her wits again? or was Miss Flagge carried off by last night's hurricane? Or, has our venerable aunt resolved to take a wife?"

"A wife, Maurice? You mean a husband."

"No, a wife. I consider, she approximates so much nearer to our sex than yours, that

when she marries she will enact the bridegroom, not the bride."

" But, it seems very unlikely she will ever act either."

" I don't know ; people, who are loudest in inveighing against a folly are often the first to commit it. And so I live in constant expectation of seeing the chaste Rebecca renounce her vows ; it would be a rare sight, would it not, Charlotte ?"

Charlotte looked anxiously at Maurice ; he was in high spirits—and it seemed cruel to check his gaiety ; Maurice was so seldom in high spirits. Still she saw it must be done : and she must do it. No other person knew him half so well ; no one else would deal so gently with his wounded feelings. With a painful effort, therefore, she availed herself of the sort of opening he had made, and told him the unwelcome news.

“ Georgy is going to be married? Georgy is going to be married?” he exclaimed wildly.

“ Impossible! I cannot realise it.”

“ Indeed, dear Maurice, it is a settled thing.”

“ And—and—does she love Mr. ——? What did you say he calls himself?”

“ D’Esterre.”

“ Aye, D’Esterre—does Georgy love ——?”
(Maurice could not finish the sentence.)

“ I believe, at least, we must hope so, for her sake.”

“ Yes, yes, for her sake. Yet, is it not very sudden—unexpected?”

“ Entirely; until she received the proposal, Georgina had no suspicion of his attachment.”

“ When was that?”

“ Only yesterday; the cross post brought a letter from Mr. D’Esterre.”

“ And was the offer accepted without hesitation? Was there no struggle on her part?”

“In Major Berrington’s unhappy circumstances, there is—there can be no alternative.”

“True; and she *has* accepted him? I can scarcely yet believe it.”

“Georgina had no choice. And a favourable reply to Mr. D’Esterre’s offer went by last night’s post.”

“How very strange it seems!”

“I knew how much it would surprise you; and therefore came to meet and tell you.”

Maurice wrung his sister’s hand.

“Good afternoon,” he said.

“Will you not come on? They are expecting you at home.”

“Not now—not yet. I cannot see her yet.”

Then, springing on his horse, he galloped towards Marston.

When Charlotte returned home, she found her sisters engaged in various tasks of useful needle-work, while Miss Rocket, seated at the

head of the table, held in her hand a large, old-fashioned looking book.

“Well,” she cried, laying down the volume, “what have you done with Maurice?”

“Maurice is returned to Marston.”

“Aye, vexed to have lost Georgina, I suppose; foolish boy, I told him what it would come to.”

“I am interrupting you,” observed Charlotte.

“Not at all. I was only reading a paper out of the Spectator to the girls, for fear they should all die of envy at Georgina’s luck. It is the history of a lady who was blessed with no less than six husbands. Just hear what she says of them all.” Then, resuming the book, Miss Rocket read, in a loud stentorian voice, as follows:—“My first insulted me, my second was nothing to me, my third disgusted me, my fourth would have ruined me, the fifth tormented me, and the sixth would have starved

me.' There, young ladies, what do you think of that?"

"It is a caricature," said one.

"All the better likeness, then," rejoined her aunt.

"It is very improbable," observed another.

"No woman ever had six husbands."

"She would not have survived if she had," replied Miss Rocket. "One, or at the utmost two, would be the death of any woman; half a husband would have done my business, with his fancies and his fidgets; men are made up of fancies."

"Oh!" cried Belinda, "if you knew—"

"My dear Belinda, we do all know very well how ridiculous you are. Pray let us hear no more about it. Charlotte, did you call in on Nanny Simpkins?"

"Yes; she is better, quite out of danger."

"I'm glad to hear it. Ring the bell for lights. How short the days are growing."

"You are very industrious," said Charlotte, observing with what zeal Miss Rocket plied her knitting needles.

"I am in a hurry to finish this for Maurice; he'll suffer from the winds these sharp wintry nights."

"Maurice will never wear it," muttered Belinda.

"Very likely. I'm afraid he will be more careless of himself than ever, now. Silly fellow—if he had only listened to my advice two years ago, and married Miss Flaxman with her ten thousand pounds—but he wouldn't even hear of it. Love seems to make a man deaf, as well as blind. However, it's no use fretting now. Jane, stir the fire."

CHAPTER XII.

TOWARDS the close of the week, a most exquisitely appointed travelling equipage drew up before the little postern gate of Major Berrington's old-fashioned residence; and, after a few seconds of delay, similar in its nature to that which had marked Lady Kingsbury's arrival, Mr. D'Esterre, dressed in the perfection of fashionable elegance, alighted. He was met midway by Major Berrington, while Georgina remained in the little parlour,

feeling and looking most excessively awkward.

The meeting between the young people was very constrained; the tête-à-tête Major Berrington most considerably forwarded by absenting himself from the room, still worse; and all were glad when it was time to separate to dress for dinner. After that repast matters improved; in common with the generality of men of his rank and standing in the army, Major Berrington was an agreeable companion; Perceval had lived much in the world, they found many topics mutually interesting, and, with the assistance of a little music (not, as may be supposed, in Georgina's very best style), the evening passed rapidly.

The next day was spent in talking over settlements, and various improvements then in progress at Ringland, Mr. D'Esterre's country seat. During this discussion, a keen observer might have detected a slight expression of con-

temptuous satire in his handsome mouth, as Georgina, to whose taste he deferred the furniture and hangings of the drawing and breakfast-rooms, in support of her opinion, occasionally quoted Mrs. King Lewis's, or Lady Burton's, houses, at Eastbeach. Georgina, however, was not one of those quick-sighted persons, and her heart swelled with gratitude towards the man who, though so infinitely her superior, could yet thus condescend to learn her wishes, and consult her taste.

On the morrow he departed, to the infinite dissatisfaction of the Atherley ladies, both old and young, who had been all anxiety to form their own judgment respecting him ; but whose wishes, owing to the abruptness of his movements, were not gratified. And even Perceval's alleged motive, that of hurrying the workmen, in order that the marriage might take place with as little delay as possible, proved insuffi-

cient to pacify the disappointed fair ones ; nor could a splendid diamond ring, which, from that day sparkled upon Georgina's hand, prevent grave looks, and ominous assertions, that "Mr. D'Esterre, undoubtedly, was very odd—they hoped Miss Berrington would be happy with him—but, certainly, there was no denying he was very unlike other people." Some of the young ladies affirmed they would not marry such a man for the whole world : and their mamas agreed it would be a very great risk.

Georgina, meanwhile, was deep in consultation with Charlotte and Miss Rocket, respecting her future wardrobe ; and, in truth, it was a matter needing both thought and management ; for Major Berrington had presented his daughter with a fifty pound bank note, and, after explaining the embarrassment of his finances, begged that, if possible, she would limit her expenses to that sum.

Fifty pounds for wedding clothes!—For the trousseau of the future mistress of Ringland—the bride of the well-dressed, fastidious D'Esterre! Even Rebecca was posed.

“Well,” she said, after one of the many dissertations that were held upon the subject, “if I go to town, as it seems very probable I must, perhaps I shall be able to do something for you there; every thing is cheaper and better in London.”

“Oh yes;” replied Georgina, “I know there is the greatest possible difference. London mantua makers are quite superior, especially the French; and Mr. D'Esterre said, the other day, that his mother, Lady Gertrude, never wears any thing that is not made by Madame Duval. I should like very much to employ Madame Duval for some of my things; that is to say, if she is not too extravagant.”

“We can but see. Do you know where she lives?”

“ No: I forgot to get her address; but Lady Kingsbury employs a French milliner, and I will ask for her’s.”

“ Have you written to Lady Kingsbury to tell her of your marriage?”

“ No, not yet.”

“ Then pray lose no more time.”

Georgina found some little difficulty in communicating tidings, which she thought, might not, perhaps, be altogether welcome, either to her aunt or sister; for she remembered Lady Kingsbury’s anxiety to see Miss Irving married to Perceval D’Esterre, and now she was herself becoming alive to his many perfections, she placed less confidence in Janet’s assertions of perfect indifference. How could any one remain indifferent to Perceval?

But this apprehension was totally unfounded. Lady Kingsbury would, certainly, have preferred that Mr. D’Esterre had continued con-

stant to his first love, and thus relieved her from all future anxiety respecting Janet; but as it seemed he would not perform this friendly office, she was happy in reflecting that, by proposing to Georgina, he had done the next best thing. Lady Kingsbury was really therefore gratified by the intelligence, and felt but one drawback to her satisfaction, namely, a trifling awkwardness in announcing to her friends at Eastbeach that Mr. D'Esterre, whom latterly she had been accustomed to cry down—whom she affirmed had been rejected by her elder niece, was now on the eve of marrying the younger.

But she was well skilled in the use of words : and under her management, from being, as she had before described, vain, silly, and half-ruined—Perceval gained that point of excellence, usually accorded to all young gentlemen on the eve of matrimony. “ He was a very

fine young man; every thing a parent could desire; quite worthy of Georgina." All men are this previous to their marriage; how odd it is so few continue to deserve their reputation.

"Dear, how strange!" said Maria Greenwood, "Mr. D'Esterre is going to marry Miss Berrington, after having been refused by her sister. Why then he must have been in love with both of them at once!"

"Not at all;" replied her mother in an acrimonious tone; for, excepting where their own daughters are concerned, *mamas* seldom hear of splendid marriages with feelings of complacency—"it is not at all odd; a disappointed man is always easily attracted; if you had managed properly, he might, perhaps, have even thought of you. Now, don't loll about in that manner; you will certainly grow crooked."

Maria raised herself from her leaning position, and resumed the occupation she had momentarily laid by.

“ By the way,” asked her mama, “ have you been practising the duett you are to sing to-night ?”

“ Not this morning. I was anxious to finish washing in these neutral tints; if I leave them now, my drawing will be spoilt.”

“ That’s of no consequence. Drawing is very unimportant; in fact, no one knows whether a girl draws or not; and the stooping position, people generally acquire who draw much, is exceedingly inelegant; besides hurting the complexion — your nose looks very red indeed, to-day, Maria. Pray let me hear you go over that duett; you sang horribly out of tune, the other night.”

“ Mama, I had a cold,” Maria began, then recollecting how much Mrs. Greenwood disliked such excuses, suddenly checked herself, and *faute de mieux*, returned to Mr. D’Esterre’s marriage. “ Perhaps,” she said, while putting by her drawing, “ as Mr. D’Esterre seems so

apt to lose his heart, Miss Berrington may not be very happy with him, after all."

"I'm not of your opinion. Mr. D'Esterre's forgetting Miss Irving is nothing out of the common; and, as he is a gentleman of good family and fortune, I know no reason why Miss Berrington should not be perfectly happy. At any rate, I should be very glad to see you change places with her."

"And so should I," thought Maria. "Mama grows more cross and snappish every day."

There was truth enough in poor Maria's observation; yet Mrs. Greenwood was not deficient in affection for her daughter; on the contrary, it was anxiety for what she considered her most important interests that rendered her thus peevish and unfeeling. Pity it was that her solicitude took not a higher and a better aim. Maria might then have kept her health, and Mrs. Greenwood her good temper. Peace follows in the train of piety.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN writing to Georgina, Lady Kingsbury expressed herself highly delighted with her projected marriage : she did not, it is true, propose to grace the nuptial ceremony with her presence, for the bare notion of the Grange in the month of December made her Ladyship's teeth chatter ; but she sent many kind messages, and, what was even more acceptable, a draft upon her banker for thirty pounds.

Janet wrote as follows —“ Was I not right ?

Did I not say truly, dearest Georgy, when I told you Perceval would turn to you, to heal the wound I had inflicted? Yes, my sweet sister, I foresaw it all; and in the same prophetic spirit do I now foretell that you will make his happiness, and he yours.

“ You are indeed admirably calculated for each other ; even those traits in D’Esterre’s character which were to me objectionable, will prove, perhaps, attractive in your eyes. Suffer me, however, to offer you one counsel ; never hint your knowledge of his having been refused by me. Men are quite as vain as we are ; and you will greatly wound his feelings, perhaps exasperate his temper, by alluding to that unhappy business. Oh ! how I wish I could be with you, above all be present at your marriage. Alas, it is impossible. Lady Kingsbury has been much indisposed lately, and will not hear of my leaving her ; but my best prayers, and

fondest wishes shall attend you both. Contrary to my suggestions, Lady Kingsbury has, I find, forwarded to you a bill upon her banker. I wished her to make a suitable present of jewels, but she fancied money would be more acceptable. It is strange how little delicacy some, even well-meaning persons, have.

“Farewell, dearest—offer my most friendly regards and congratulations to Major Berrington. What will he do without you? I think I must coax him to adopt me; but I am not Georgina.”

Janet threw down the pen. “No!” she exclaimed, bitterly, “I am not Georgina. In this—in everything, what is my destiny compared with hers? Perceval—Perceval—No—you are not worth a tear!”

But matches have been broken off, why then not this? For some time Janet remained considering the possibility of such a contingency,

and turning in her mind by what agency it might be accomplished. An anonymous communication? The chances of detection were too great, and the success too uncertain. Should she then repair to Atherley, and by personal influence endeavour to achieve her wished-for purpose? This expedient carried with it many recommendations; it would prove equally her indifference to Perceval, and her affection for Georgina; whilst on the spot she would perceive a thousand means of which she might avail herself; and long did Janet try to bring her mind to prosecute the plan; but it was impossible. She could not be a witness of her sister's happiness — of Perceval's inconstancy. The business then must run its course — the hated union be completed — she could only hope that it would prove unhappy; and she derived much consolation from the conviction that, in all probability, so very fickle an

admirer would prove an equally inconstant spouse.

These communications satisfied Georgina; and, from this time, her young and ardent fancy pictured a future, teeming with scenes, bright, joyous, and delightful. She saw herself the happy mistress of a place, equal, if not superior, to any she had ever seen—the object of Perceval's affection—the dispenser of happiness to others, and, above all, to her dear father. It is true, nothing had been said of Major Berrington's residing at Ringland; and she, aware of his attachment to his accustomed home, forebore to press the subject; but, in her own mind, she had quite determined he should live with them, and had even fixed upon the room which, according to her notions of Ringland, would suit him best. Georgina's vivid imagination sketched an existence fraught with happiness.

Oh ! why are the realities of life so different from its hopes ? Why do we find a worm in every gourd, a canker in the fairest bud, a thorn near every rose ? Is it not, that we should ever bear in mind that this is not our home ?

Mr. D'Esterre's letters were not frequent, but they contained glowing descriptions of the improvements he was making to embellish Georgina's future residence ; he sent, also, some very splendid presents ; and even carried his solicitude to the length of begging she would oblige him by employing Lady Gertrude's milliner. Georgina, delighted she possessed the power of gratifying one whose affection she could not for an instant doubt—whose thoughts so perpetually recurred to her—gladly entrusted Miss Rocket (now called to London for the first time since quite a girl), with the delightful task of ordering her wedding dress from Madame Regnier.

Rebecca did not altogether relish visiting the great metropolis alone, and as it was considered change might be favourable to Belinda, chose her as her companion.

“What a relief Belinda’s absence is,” remarked one of the Miss Arnolds, the morning after their departure.

“Yes,” replied Jane, “but I think it very hard my aunt should have given her so entirely the preference. It would have been but fair if we had all cast lots about it. I really think she might have given us each a chance.”

“You forget my aunt said she meant to take Belinda because she is so silly and head-strong, she never likes to have her out of sight.”

“That’s a very poor encouragement for good behaviour. I believe, however, that, in nine cases out of ten, selfish, ill-tempered persons come a thousand times better off than those who are amiable. People are afraid of them,

and so give up to all their whims, often even at the expense of others. It really appears very bad policy to be well-conducted."

"If you look only to this world, perhaps it is," observed Charlotte.

"Ah, that is one of Maurice's speeches. Charlotte, how much alike you are!"

"We are twins, you know."

"If I were Maurice, I should call out Mr. D'Esterre," cried the youngest Miss Arnold, who thought herself a girl of spirit.

"Poor Maurice! I wonder Georgina never guessed how fond he is of her."

"Oh, she is so used to it; she has been his pet since she was quite a child."

"What a nice thing it must be to marry a man of fortune!" said Jane.

"That would depend upon the gentleman you married," remarked Miss Flagge; who,

during Rebecca's absence, was staying with her nieces, as a sort of chaperone.

"I shouldn't care what the man was like. Only think of the delight of having everything one fancied, and of being admired and praised by all the world!"

"Does that necessarily follow?"

"To be sure it does: just look at Georgina, what a change her engagement has made! A little while ago, people, some, at least, allowed her to be pretty, but nothing further, and scarcely anybody noticed her or Major Berrington. Now we hear of nothing but her beauty and grace, and every other perfection; while the very same persons, who formerly neglected her, are trying who can show most civility. Both Lady Wrighton and Mrs. Daymour have given pressing invitations to their houses. The change is, really, quite amusing. I tell Georgina she will be obliged,

soon, to play queen, and hold a drawing-room."

"Will those invitations be accepted?" enquired Theresa.

"Oh, dear no. Major Berrington never stirs from home; and, of course, Georgina will not think of leaving him."

"Maurice, how are you?" cried Charlotte, to her brother, who just then entered the apartment.

With a look and tone which gave the lie to his assertion, Maurice assured her he was well.

"We have been discoursing on the benefits of being rich," said Jane, addressing the newcomer.

"You chose an ample subject for discussion."

"Ample, indeed," rejoined Miss Flagge. "I would fain persuade my young friends that money, in itself, is not quite the mighty talis-

man they seem to think. Riches are, certainly, great blessings, but we must be careful not to overrate their value."

"That would not be an easy task," replied Maurice; smarting from the consequence of his rival's superior wealth. "Money, if not in itself the first of earthly advantages, is, at any rate, the key to every other. What is there money will not purchase?"

"Contentment—which is one of the foundation stones of happiness. The rich are, almost always, peevish and dissatisfied."

"I agree with you;" said Charlotte: "indeed, I feel quite confident, that could we enter every dwelling in the land, we should find the balance of happiness nearly even—the poor have their real trials—the rich, their fancied ones. The obligation to employment is in itself a blessing—many people, I am convinced, fret away their happiness, simply, from want of better occupation."

“Charlotte,” asked Maurice, abruptly, “will you go with me to Major Berrington’s? It is some time since I was there.”

In a few minutes they had reached the Grange. Georgina was from home: she had gone with Mrs. Beachcroft, to return some of the civilities that, as Jane Arnold very truly said, had originated in her altered prospects. Maurice felt her absence a relief; a few weeks back, and her society had been his dearest happiness—and yet, he was not changed. Alas!—his were not feelings soon to alter.

When the visit was nearly concluded, Miss Berrington returned. Excepting for an instant, Maurice durst not trust himself to look at her: but the slight transitory glimpse he caught told, too plainly told, that she was happy—and his heart tightened—it seemed so hard that she who caused his misery should neither heed nor pity it.

“ Georgy, there is a letter for you upon that table,” said her father.

Georgina made no attempt to take the packet ; she did not even interrupt a lively description she was giving of her morning’s occupation ; but, she looked conscious, very conscious ; and when the Arnolds motioned to depart, made no effort to detain them. Maurice observed all this, and he left the house more sad and dark in spirit than he entered it.

“ Charlotte, you saw Mr. D’Esterre ?”

“ Yes, for a few minutes.”

“ Describe him to me.”

“ I hardly can ; I saw so very little of him. I do not think I heard him speak three words.”

“ What is he like in person ?”

“ To me, there appeared nothing about Mr. D’Esterre remarkable one way or the other. Just the sort of well dressed, conceited looking man you meet with in every ball-room.”

(Charlotte felt sore on Maurice's account) "Why do you wish to know?"

"Because she loves him. Yes," he continued mournfully, "Georgina loves him."

"So recent an attachment cannot be very deep."

"It is better she should. Yes; better even for me. Hopeless affection is never long enduring. Farewell."

"Nay, but you must stay and dine with us; you must indeed. We see so little of you now."

"Another time; to-day I cannot. I have one or two poor people at Marston who require looking after."

"Maurice, you work too hard."

"I have no choice: nothing but constant occupation drives away the thought"—then seeing how anxious, and unhappy Charlotte looked, he checked himself, and added in a lighter tone; "But do not fret on my account:

you know, we all need discipline, I, most especially; and it will not last long; the struggle will soon be over."

As Maurice spoke, he smiled; but it was a ghastly, mocking smile. Charlotte turned hastily away; his words conveyed a double meaning—might they not be prophetic?

CHAPTER XIV.

BELINDA ARNOLD TO GEORGINA BERRINGTON.

Thursday, Arundel-street, Strand.

“ DEAREST GEORGINA,

“ I SNATCH up my pen to inform you of our safe arrival in this great Metropolis, and to give you some particulars of our (to me perhaps eventful) journey. Our fellow travellers consisted of a glover from Marston, a quiet, respectable man, I dare say, but quite out of my way; and a person who had once been housekeeper at the Duke of L——s. With her accustomed volubility, my Aunt entered into conversation with both these persons; whilst I, in pensive silence, gazed on the passing objects, and fed my grief with thoughts of Slycer. Oh!

my dear Georgina, may your fate be unlike mine ; may you never taste the pangs of disappointed love !

“ At dinner, we were joined by the outside passengers ; one of whom, a most interesting young man, in a blue coat and yellow waistcoat, paid me the most marked attention ; and, by his witty descriptions and fascinating remarks, succeeded in recalling the long forgotten smile to my varying countenance. I was positively sorry, when the guard, a coarse fat man with a great red face, broke up our charming *tête-a-tête*, and I exchanged my entertaining companion for the vulgar glover, and housekeeper ; but the latter, happily, got out at the last place where we changed horses, and then, imagine my enchantment on perceiving that the vacant seat was to be filled by my inamorato ; for such, without vanity, I may style this charming youth. From that moment, how different became the conversation, in which, you may easily believe, I henceforth took a most distinguished part. Pratt (for so I heard our new acquaintance addressed) was all attention and politeness : and, on learning we were strangers to London, its dangers, its fascinations, its difficulties, gave us much excellent advice ; and even went the length of asking if his services might not be useful in escorting us about. On which, I hinted to my

Aunt the propriety of inviting him to call upon us ; but she would not. I must say, I think her backwardness upon this occasion highly reprehensible ; it is quite evident I have made a conquest of Mr. Pratt, and who can tell it might not prove a most desirable match ! I call him Mr. Pratt, but I am by no means certain he is only an Esquire—he may be a Baronet, or even a Lord ; such people, we all know, do sometimes travel by stage coaches ; and I am sure he is handsome and genteel enough for any thing. So, I really felt quite vexed with my Aunt for treating him in such a manner, but you know she has some strange notions about marriage ; I suppose because the grapes are sour.

“ Well, my dear Georgina, we arrived at length—and Pratt gave a last token of his admiration by affectionately squeezing my hand as he handed me into the hackney coach. But what do you think ? I was so overcome by agitation that though my shoe fell off, I never missed it, until we had gone ever so far ; and though we had the coach well searched, it was in vain : so, it must have dropped off as I was getting in. Perhaps Mr. Pratt has gained possession of it—if so, he will learn my name ; and as he must have heard the order to the coachman where to set us down, it is possible—just possible that,

notwithstanding my aunt's bad management, he may find us out and renew his engaging attentions. I live in hope: oh! my Georgina, what would become of us without that sweet delusive feeling?

“ In consequence of my loss, I have not been able to accompany my aunt, who, immediately after breakfast, went out on business of hers, and yours; but, the owner of this house, who appears to be a highly respectable person, quite superior to her station in life, has sent to a ready-made shoe warehouse, and in the afternoon I hope to wander forth.

“ Mrs. Phipson has just been in with the shoemaker. I have got my walking shoes; but, oh Georgina! I have heard something which makes my head swim.’ In return for her civility, I thought it right to enter into conversation with our landlady; judge of my astonishment when I learnt that she is own aunt to the vile woman who entrapped my formerly devoted Slycer! Mrs. Phipson's brother, it seems, was a tea-dealer; who died and left his daughter thirty thousand pounds, which has been of course the bait, by means of which she decoyed that susceptible creature. They reside at present in town, keep an elegant equipage, and live quite in fashionable style. But this is not all; to my

consternation I find there is a likelihood of our meeting ; for they pay much attention to Mrs. Phipson, and come here frequently. What !—if we should be thrown together ? How must I demean myself ? of course with modest dignity, and gentle reserve ; but it will not be easy. Oh Georgina ! What a destiny is mine ! Hark—a carriage drives up to the door and stops—if it should be them ! Be still, my foolish fluttering heart. A loud knock—every instant of delay adds to my misery ; I could scratch her eyes out. I can no longer endure this anxious suspense, and will try to find out who it is by looking from the window. Oh if it should be him ! once my heart's master, and my truant love. If it should be Alfred—No, it is only my aunt Rocket in a hackney coach."

"How ridiculous Belinda is ;" observed Charlotte, when she had read thus far.

"Yes ; her heart reminds me of a tradesman's wares—at every body's service," replied Georgina.

"You don't suppose Belinda feels all this ?"

"No, no ; if she did she would be less frank about it."

“ You are well advised in this matter, I perceive,” said Charlotte archly.

Georgina answered, laughing, “ Indeed Charlotte, when Mr. D’Esterre was here, I was terribly afraid lest he should try to make me own my——sentiments.”

“ And did he ?”

“ Oh no ; he was much too considerate. It was so fortunate ; I am sure I never could have told the truth.”

Charlotte thought it was not consideration only that withheld D’Esterre.

“ What makes Belinda choose you as her correspondent ?”

“ Indeed, I don’t know ; one of her fancies, I suppose.”

“ Very likely she thought we should all laugh at her : and perhaps she is right ; near relations are not always the most lenient judges.”

“ There is a great deal more,” observed Georgina.

“ So I perceive ; and why, I wonder,” said Charlotte, recurring to the letter, “ why does my sister speak of that stranger in such familiar terms ?”

“ I conclude she thinks it more romantic ; *Mr.* sounds very common-place.”

Charlotte read on. The next paragraph was from Miss Rocket.

“ MY DEAR GEORGINA,

“ I add a few hasty lines to Belinda’s letter to tell you that you must give up all idea of employing Madame Regnier ; for the present, at least ; when you are married to Mr. D’Esterre, if he chooses you to spend a fortune in gowns or bonnets, it will be all very well ; in the meantime we must be satisfied with some more reasonable person ; her extravagance puts her out of the question. I did not waste much time with Madame Regnier, for, finding she had the assurance to ask six guineas for a hat you might have got at

Marston for thirty shillings; and that every thing was proportionably extravagant, I speedily bade her good morning, and desired the coachman to set me down at another milliner's in Bury-street, St. James's, whose name I learnt from a fellow-passenger on our road to town. Here my luck was no better: so I determined to dismiss the coach and try my chance on foot. And very fortunate it was I made this resolution; for, after walking about, I know not how long, and making more than one attempt, quite as unsuccessful as the former, I, at length, found what, I think, will answer extremely well. It was in a street near some square; Leicester, I think; but I am not quite certain. However, that is of no consequence. I have chosen two bonnets and a cap; for married women, it seems, often wear caps in the morning. As for your dresses—the best plan will be to buy the silk here (I dare say I shall be able to pick it up cheap), and you can have them made up at Atherley. The bonnets are, a white satin, to be worn on a particular occasion; this you must consider as my present; and a dark velvet for every day wear.

“ We have had a visiter, a gentleman who travelled part of the way with us, and did not

take my fancy at all ; but Belinda thinks him vastly genteel, and has contrived to make an engagement for the Theatre this evening. I would rather sit quietly at home, for I am very stiff with taking so much exercise, and care no more for plays than a cow would for a riding-habit ; but my niece is wild about it ; and I can only hope, Mr. Pratt, for that is her new admirer's name, will put the Captain out of her foolish head. By the way, talking of a riding habit, I was vexed to hear from Charlotte, the morning we left home, that Mr. D'Esterre had written, he was purchasing a horse for you. A riding dress will cost a mint of money : to say nothing of the danger to a young woman who has never been on horseback in her life, and riding with none but a giddy young man to take care of her. I once had a very serious fall myself. Mr. Pratt says he can get a frank ; so this will not go until to-morrow. The milliner has sent home your things, and very pretty they are. I find, from her card, that her address is, Miss Snipwell, Cranbourne Alley. I am so much pleased with her civility and diligence that I have ordered a bonnet for myself and each of the girls ; all to be worn on the same occasion as your white satin ; theirs blue, or pink, according to their

different complexions; mine, an apple green with lilac ribbon and flowers. I hope my nieces treat Miss Flagge with due attention. Love to your Father and all friends.

“Yours affectionately,

“REBECCA ROCKET.”

“MY DEAREST GEORGINA, Friday.

“I must add a postscript to my other lengthy dispatch, for my heart burns to communicate the tidings of its happiness to your kindred spirit. My beloved friend, I was right in my suspicions that the dear unknown would avail himself of the fortunate accident which put him in possession of my name. He called yesterday; and in his enchanting society, the hours flew on rosy pinions. In the evening he returned, in order to escort us to the Theatre; and how shall I describe the ecstasy of my feelings, or the tumultuous throbbing of my heart, as in a place where all conjoins to captivate the senses, I sat, wrapt in a * whirlwind of delight; my eyes fixed, apparently upon the gorgeous pageant, my ear bent,

* “Whirlwind of delight.”—Like other persons fond of hyperbolical expressions, Belinda was not always happy in her choice of words.

to catch the syren strains poured forth; but in reality, both sight and hearing, in fact, all my soul, was given to him who sat beside me. Georgina, description fails! Your fancy must depict the scene. One thing is evident, Gustavus (that is his name) adores me. And I return his love a thousand fold. How will it all end? He loves me, and I him—but his family may raise objections. They are evidently high people; he promised us to get a frank from his uncle, who must be a member of parliament, if not, a Peer—perhaps, Lord Camden; for, I find, from the Peerage, that Pratt is the family name of that noble house. My brain whirls with delight and ecstasy. Farewell, my sweet, my bosom friend. All happiness be thine.

“BELINDA.”

“P.S. I forgot to mention that Gustavus supped with us; our hostess having, with her characteristic consideration, provided some most tempting oysters, and bottled porter. It does not sound altogether romantic; but oysters and porter are, I find, the supper all fashionable people take after the Theatre. You may be sure, however, I did not touch the latter until *he* was gone; and limited myself to half a dozen oysters, although I could have eaten twice as many.”

“How very kind Miss Rocket is, in taking so much trouble about my clothes,” said Georgina, as Charlotte folded and laid down the letter.

“I am sure, I hope that, after all her exertions, my aunt will get you something fit to wear. Mr. D’Esterre appears to me a man who would choose his wife to be well dressed.”

“His own taste is so good. Don’t you think him very superior, Charlotte?” enquired Georgina; anxious, as every woman is, to hear her lover praised.

“Yes, Mr. D’Esterre dresses well, and looks like a gentleman; and, I dare say his taste is good, or he would not have chosen you. Now, don’t be affronted, Georgy, if I am not in ecstasies about him. You know every one does not see Mr. D’Esterre with your eyes; and, perhaps, if he had conferred on me the same honour he has done you, I should have

been of your opinion, and looked upon him as a piece of masculine perfection."

On reading this epistle, it certainly did occur to Georgina that millinery fabricated in Cranbourne Alley would not be quite the thing; she was well pleased, therefore, by the receipt of a second communication from Miss Rocket, dated a few days after the foregoing.

"MY DEAR GEORGINA,

"I find that Cranbourne Alley is not considered altogether genteel, so I am really sorry I ordered your millinery thence; but, as the mistake was mine, so shall the loss be. I have since heard of a person living in Mortimer-street, Cavendish-square, who is not expensive, and makes very pretty things; I shall order yours from her. Belinda, I am sorry to say, has met with an old school-fellow, a Mrs. Griffiths, who is going with her husband to spend a few weeks at Boulogne, and has persuaded my niece to accompany them. I set my face decidedly against this absurd expedition, but to no purpose. Bell sailed yesterday, and how or when she will

get back, I really cannot say, I shall be kept here some little time longer ; and, if she be not returned at the time I am at liberty, I shall certainly not wait for her. One thing, in a measure, reconciles me to the expedition ; and that is, it will take her out of Mr. Pratt's way—a most vulgar, disagreeable person is that young man ; and so forward and presuming, I find it quite impossible to keep him in his proper place. What his profession is, I really can't divine ; Bell says he is a banker, because he does business somewhere in the city ; but I have looked through all the list of banking-houses, and see no such name. I wish with all my heart some man of common sense would take a fancy to her ; and as, in matrimony, people often choose their opposites, perhaps one day I shall see her married to a man with brains. Good bye. I am glad to hear you are all going on so well. Love to Miss Flagge, your father, and the girls.

“ Ever your affectionate,

Monday.

“ REBECCA ROCKET.”

“ You are becoming an important person, Georgina. Really, quite an extensive correspondence,” said Major Berrington, one morn-

ing, as a letter, bearing a foreign postmark, was put into his daughter's hands.

"*You* do not write so much as formerly, papa," replied Georgina, in a tone between enquiry and remark.

"No. I have been enabled to make arrangements which, for the present, give me some little respite."

What those arrangements were, Major Berrington did not think proper to inform Georgina. Had he done so, she would not, probably, have understood them; for, notwithstanding all our quickness of perception, a gift we frequently possess in a more eminent degree than men—whenever business is concerned, it may not be denied we are uncommonly obtuse. Belinda's letter was much more in Georgina's way.

Boulogne Sur Mer.

"I write to you from France—fair, lilled, beauteous France—is it not enchanting, rapturous,

my Georgina? But to explain my coming—to dissipate the astonishment my lovely cousin feels at hearing of my journey. You remember my dearest friend and school companion, Eugenia Hopkins? She, who was everything to me, until her marriage rent the bond, and we were parted—but not for ever. After years of separation, painful to us both, we met again on Ludgate Hill, whither my aunt had gone on your account, in search of bargains. By the way, why do you limit yourself so closely? are you not aware that a man becomes liable for his wife's debts? if I were in your place, I should buy everything I fancied, and let Mr. D'Esterre settle the bills at some future opportunity. But to return to my Eugenia; we met once more, I say, and with reciprocal delight. But alas! our pleasure seemed likely to be short-lived: Eugenia and her husband were engaged to spend the Christmas at Boulogne; and I, you know, was in attendance upon my aunt. But, unable to bear the torture of another separation, we at length agreed I should accompany them; and, in spite of a great deal of vexatious opposition, here I am.

“I wish I could describe the passage—tell you of the variety of interesting objects we passed, in steaming down the river. I intended to have done so, to

have taken notes, and provided myself with tablets for that purpose. But on first setting out, the weather was against us; a thick fog enveloped all; and I really was so cold and miserable, I could not have made my pencil mark had I seen every wonder of the world. But, to say the truth, I saw nothing but dirty vessels and muddy water. Once fairly at sea, the weather cleared; and with ecstatic pleasure did I stand and watch our vessel's pathway through the azure waters. I even composed some lines on the occasion: but alas, alas, I very soon grew faint and ill. I could neither see, hear, nor understand; in short, was sea-sick, and obliged to go below, where I remained until we reached Boulogne. But the worst of my misfortunes was that, whilst I lay in a state of almost insensibility, some one applied a vinaigrette, and burnt my nose most terribly. I suppose the office was well meant; but I, really, wish it had been omitted. We had little trouble on landing; we were most kindly received, and two days after our arrival I was as well as ever, excepting my poor nose.

“ I have now been here a fortnight—and to say the time has been spent delightfully would be but faint praise. Balls, every evening—walks and sight-seeing by day. Oh! it is beyond description;

and I am quite convinced there is no society to equal that we meet with on the continent ; nor can I any longer wonder that our nobility and wealthy men are all so fond of living out of England. I cannot pourtray all the wonders of this place—its ramparts, churches, harbour—one day you will see them all. Yes, Georgina ; you will, surely, one day travel ; and then, you will see Boulogne !!

“ One circumstance has greatly enhanced my enjoyment. On the fourth day after our arrival, we were standing on the pier, watching the arrival of an English steamer ; when, judge of my enchantment on discovering that Gustavus was on board ! I will not say, I was taken by surprise ; for, as I told him of my intended trip, I thought it very likely the dear youth might follow. Eugenia, all kindness and consideration, gave him, for my sake, a most cordial welcome ; and we have since been constantly together, without the drawback of my Aunt’s ill-natured, envious strictures. But all happiness must have an end. She has written to insist on my immediate return ; and, as some friends of Eugenia’s are on the wing for England, I must obey her mandate. Gustavus, too, is going, which reconciles me to my lot. I must make one remark on the much vaunted wit and *politesse* of the French

people. I have not found the shop-keepers, by any means, so civil and intelligent as I expected. Indeed, I think them very stupid: they do not even understand their own language, and when I address them in French, stand staring as if they had never heard such words before; or, in English, ask me what it is I want. Now, surely, this is being very dull; for at Miss Braceback's, I was always thought to speak French with remarkable precision. But it arises, no doubt, as Gustavus says, from the fact that the natives here speak only *patois*, while my French is Parisian. He has the most exquisite taste in jewellery; on my return, should you observe a delicate gold chain encircling my neck, you must not seek to know what it suspends.

“ Farewell,

“ Think often of your most affectionate

“ BELINDA.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLOTTE ARNOLD's doubts, as to the issue of her Aunt's exertions, proved themselves perfectly correct—Rebecca did her best, but dress was not Rebecca's forte. Georgina, however, felt this little *contretems* less than many persons of her age and circumstances would have done. She had never been accustomed to consider dress a matter of importance ; and, excepting to regret she had been unable to follow Mr. D'Esterre's wishes, thought little on the subject,

nor, when Miss Rocket proudly exhibited the fruit of her good natured labours, and showy bonnets, or flimsy silks were held up for Georgina's admiration, although her better taste condemned the tawdry articles, would she, for the world, have suffered her opinion to transpire; or hurt, by word or look, the feelings of her kind, well-meaning relative.

The day preceding that on' which Georgina should become a Bride, she received a letter from her sister, couched in the fondest terms: again repeating Janet's wishes for the happiness of the two beings whose fates were henceforth to be linked in one, and still expressing her deep regret at the impossibility of her witnessing their union. The letter concluded by begging Georgina's acceptance of some ornaments, which Miss Irving described as trifling, but which, to her sister's unpractised notions, seemed perfectly magnificent; and she was

pained by observing that Perceval (who had arrived the night before), far from joining in her praises of Janet's taste and affection, smiled satirically as she read the letter: and, in place of admiring, criticised the trinkets. Perceval knew well enough the ornaments were such as Janet would not herself have worn, and he doubted the real value of her affectionate expressions.

“ Janet was right,” thought Georgina, while she placed her ill appreciated treasures on her dressing table. “ Mr. D'Esterre is difficult to please, satirical, ill-natured—” and a sort of shrinking feeling came upon her, as, in imagination, she beheld herself for ever subject to the strictures of so severe a judge.

But it soon passed away. When they met again, she was prepared for walking.

“ Where are you going this miserable day?” he enquired in a tone of good-natured surprise.

“ Into the village. I have a few farewell calls to make.”

“ Take me with you,” said Perceval, placing her arm beneath his; but, at the same time, marvelling that so young a girl should walk alone.

Notwithstanding the inclement weather, every body was sufficiently accommodating to be from home, excepting one old decrepit creature, who had long been Georgina’s favourite pensioner. Here they staid some little time: and Perceval spoke and looked so kindly, and finally bestowed so handsome a donation on the miserable being, that Georgina quite forgot his want of sympathy respecting Janet—and again did he become all that was good and estimable.

When they returned home, Georgina found Maurice Arnold sitting with her father.

“ Oh Maurice,” she cried, throwing off her bonnet as she hurried forward, “ dear Maurice,

how happy I am to see you. But no—I have half a mind to be offended. You have been such an absentee of late, that, indeed you do not deserve a welcome.”

“My time,” said Maurice hesitatingly, “has been much taken up——”

“And even now,” interrupted Major Berrington, “Maurice is come to say we must not expect to see him to-morrow.”

“You will not be here to-morrow? You will not be present at my marriage?” said Georgina, half reproachfully.

“I cannot, dearest Georgy. It will not be possible. Accept, instead, my best, my fondest wishes for your welfare—this trifle, too, perhaps you will receive in memory of old times. Wear it, dear Georgy; and when you chance to cast your eye upon the dial-plate, think of the friends you leave at Atherley.” He put into her hand a very beautiful gold repeater, with corresponding chain and seals.

“ Oh Maurice, surely you do not think I need so costly a remembrancer ? ”

“ Bless you, Georgina, bless you, my own sweet girl. May every happiness be yours—above all may he you love prove worthy of you,” said Maurice in a tone of the profoundest feeling—then, parting back the glossy clustering ringlets, he gently kissed her fair young forehead, and in an instant he was gone.

Georgina burst into tears: this was her first family farewell, and not till now had she, in any measure, realised the parting from all she had hitherto most loved, which her marriage must entail. Up to this moment, it had not occurred to her that, in forming an entirely new tie, old ones must be weakened, if not utterly dissolved. Her tears were quickly wiped away, for she dreaded to decrease the depression Major Berrington naturally felt at their approaching separation; but she remained

silent and dejected, during the remainder of that day.

On his side, Perceval was far from being perfectly at ease: he had remained without, to give some instructions to his valet; opened the door of the sitting-room, just in time to witness Maurice's farewell and Georgina's agitation, and forthwith a most unpleasant surmise darted into his mind. At Eastbeach, he had heard the report of Georgina's engagement; and though Lady Kingsbury's denial, together with Major Berrington's subsequent assurance that his daughter's inclinations were altogether free, had, for the time, carried their full weight, he could not now avoid suspecting that the rumour had been well grounded, and that the poor, but preferred, relative had been sacrificed to the more wealthy suitor.

The evening passed heavily.

"Georgina," said her father, when she rose

to bid him good night, "let me hear my old favourite ballad once more. It may be long before you sing to me again, my child; and let it be without accompaniment."

In compliance with this request, Georgina sang the same sweet simple air that had formerly attracted Perceval's attention, and laid the basis of their present intimacy. At first, her voice was tremulous, but, gaining strength as she proceeded, swelled into rich and powerful melody. An artist would have vainly sought a fairer model than Georgina Berrington, as, with eyes partially up-raised, her delicately rounded cheek tinged with a brilliant red, and gentle heaving of her snowy bosom, she breathed the last few notes of that old, simple air. A painter would, I say, have joyfully transferred that lovely image to his canvass; and Perceval, who looked on all with something of an artist's eye, was not insensible

to his betrothed's attractions; yet was the look he cast upon her one which spoke admiration, rather than any warmer feeling. Georgina withdrew.

"D'Esterre," said Major Berrington, after a minute's silence, "my daughter is a lovely creature, but she is something more than beautiful. She is amiable, pure, virtuous; the picture is not unworthy of its frame, the jewel of its setting. I can give Georgina little or nothing; yet, in bestowing her on you, I feel I am parting with a treasure beyond price; she is a being with all a woman's excellencies, and few, if any, of her faults. Prove yourself worthy of her; treat her with affection, for hitherto she has known unkindness only by its name. Oh! as you hope yourself, one day, to be a father, heed now a father's charge; deal gently with my child: and in the splendid home to which you bear her, never, I enjoin you,

give her one moment's reason to regret the one she leaves."

There was a great deal in this speech that jarred on Perceval's feelings; he thought the obligation lay on his side, not on Georgina's; and he was annoyed at the mistrust implied by Major Berrington's appeal. Casting therefore a look of contempt round the apartment so small, and meanly furnished, he answered, almost sneeringly,

"I trust Miss Berrington will see no cause to quarrel with her future home—I hope she will find it possible to be happy at Ringland." Having thus said, D'Esterre stalked out of the room, with an air of haughtiness his bearing did not usually display; while Major Berrington remained buried in reflections, which, in a man of more energetic character, had perhaps, even then, issued in the event so ardently desired by Janet—a rupture of the engagement.

It was already dusk, when Maurice returned to Marston: and, hastily dismounting from his steed, without bestowing the accustomed caress, he entered the room which served him as his study; and, throwing himself into a chair, fell into a painful reverie, or rather, I should say, continued to indulge the same unhappy train of thoughts that had possessed his mind since leaving Atherley.

For years, had Maurice Arnold loved his cousin. Long, long ago, when, as a soft and artless child, she would come nestling to his side—or climb upon his knee, that she might better tell him all her joys and sorrows, Maurice had loved her. She was a girl; full of frank gaiety, of guileless love, winning all hearts by her sweet gentleness; and still he loved her. And now, when each rich charm of dawning womanhood was flung around her, still Maurice loved her — fondly, and truly

loved. It was a first and only love ; so deeply grafted on his nature that it became himself ; a strong abiding feeling, which, though time might weaken, death only could efface.

In the many struggles of a most arduous profession, in the sad hours of heart-sick despondency to which his numerous disappointments had given birth, she had been his polar star—the haven where his wishes ever rested—the anchor where his fainting hope had leant and gathered energy—the single sun-beam of his dark and wintry day.

'Twas true, her feelings did not correspond with his.—Maurice knew they did not ; but though this knowledge mortified him, it did not damp his expectations, nor cloud his future hopes. Hitherto, her youth, together with his inability to maintain a wife, had kept him silent ; but he yet believed that when the chilling mists of poverty were passed away, and honour would

no longer seal his lips, it could not be that one so gentle and affectionate would still remain insensible to his unswerving love. Animated by this bright, this cheering prospect, for the last two years, especially, Maurice had toiled with unremitting zeal:—early and late—by night, by day, he laboured on; careless of fatigue; indifferent to discomfort—regardless, fatally regardless, of the rapid inroads a fearful malady was making in a constitution always fragile. And what was the result of all this self-denial, this labour — study — zeal? A stranger cast his roving fancy on the sweet flower he had so tenderly watched over; and it must grace that stranger's bosom!—For he was wealthy—Maurice Arnold poor!

A few short hours, and Georgina, *his* Georgina, she whose bright form had been his thought by day, his dream by night, the idol of his hope, the cherished treasure of his inmost soul—

would be for ever lost to him. Oh! it was agony to think—and yet, no shade of bitterness towards her, no envious feeling towards his successful rival, nor even a repining murmur against the poverty that had proved the blight of his own happiness mingled with Maurice's reflections. He sought to bear his disappointment as a Christian man: and with a groan that spoke his tortured soul, there rose a fervent supplication, that a trial needful, or it would never have been awarded, might not be sent in vain!

CHAPTER XVI.

“HAPPY is the bride that the sun shines on.” If there be truth in this old saying, Georgina must be happy; for a still atmosphere, a cloudless sky, and brilliant sunshine, did honour to her bridal morn; while from each shrub and tree, even each tiny blade of grass, gleamed diamonds, rubies, sapphires in prismatic splendour. All was bright and smiling; and, as Georgina cast a tearful glance around the spot where she had been so happy, so beloved, she

fancied it never had seemed thus beautiful before. And she must leave it—bid farewell to home, indulgent relatives, and early friends—must enter upon fresh scenes—must mix with strangers—and contract new ties!

For one so young and inexperienced, it was a painful thought; and, while Georgina trembled at the chilling prospect, she remembered, almost with a shudder, that he, upon whose arm she must henceforward lean—who was to be her guide, protector, all in all—was but a stranger, too. Her heart was heavy; and it needed much encouragement from Charlotte Arnold, who came to assist in the great business of the bride's toilet, and no little effort on her own part, to drive her tears away.

When the last curl had been arranged, the last fold given to the dress, Rebecca came into the room; and, after turning Georgina round and round, said, as she threw a really pretty shawl across her shoulders,

“Well, Georgy, you look very pretty, very pretty indeed; I dare say Mr. D’Esterre will think so. Now, there’s my last present, and here’s my last piece of advice. I dare say one will be more welcome than the other; but that’s no matter, it’s my duty to say what I believe to be right, so I now tell you there are two or three things you must be careful about. Charlotte, we want a pin here; yes, that will do now. What was I saying? Oh—in the first place, don’t let Mr. D’Esterre think you over fond of him; it’s bad policy—and love makes a woman ridiculous. Besides, people never care for what they can get without difficulty; and if Mr. D’Esterre knows how much you care for him, the odds are that he will take less pains about pleasing you. In the next place, I wish you to make him understand that though you are ready to yield him all due and proper obedience as a wife should do (you

know, my dear, it is written, ‘wives obey your husbands’), yet that you can have a will of your own: for men—selfish creatures, are apt to take advantage of a woman if they think she hasn’t spirit enough to stand up for herself, sometimes. But, above all, don’t let his family trample upon you. You are going among strangers, who may, or may not, receive you kindly. I hope and believe they will. But, at any rate, you are far more likely to ensure the esteem, respect, awe, and the affection of your husband’s relations, by shewing them that you entertain a proper sense of your own value. Modesty and humility are all very well in their way; but, say I, ‘Think a good deal of yourself, and other people will do the same.’ And, though I wouldn’t, on any account, you should become habitually selfish; yet, as people commonly take advantage of a young, yielding disposition, it may not be amiss you should

remember that, in this world, the persons who get on best are not those who make the greatest exertions, but the fewest sacrifices. Now, God bless you, my dear girl; don't forget old friends; and always recollect what a parent your father has been to you."

How far Rebecca's advice was judicious it boots not to enquire; it was, at any rate, ill-timed, since it accorded but too well with Georgina's previous train of thought. A violent burst of grief was the consequence, and it was only by dint of repeated draughts of sal volatile and water she became sufficiently composed to leave her room.

"There now," thought Rebecca, as Major Berrington led his daughter down stairs, "there now, what with Georgina's crying, and Major Berrington's impatience (men are always in such a hurry—never can do anything without putting themselves into a fever), I've

forgotten to speak my mind about Miss Irving."

Rebecca's exhortation, long as it was, had been curtailed. It had been her full intention to warn her young relative against admitting Janet too frequently a visiter beneath her roof.

"It's always a foolish plan," argued the shrewd Miss Rocket, "and here particularly so: for, as Mr. D'Esterre thought proper to flirt with Janet once, when he's got tired of Georgina, he may do the same again. Poor Georgy! I hope she'll be happy; but it really is a great risk. Certainly women are very badly off; for, if a girl doesn't happen to have a fortune of her own, she must either marry or be starved."

No brilliant train of equipages was in attendance to convey the bridal party from their respective homes to church. Two glass coaches and a fly, together with the clergyman's old-

fashioned brown post-chaise, formed the whole cortége, and presented no unstriking contrast to the bridegroom's well appointed travelling carriage.

Amongst all the events that form the striking epochs of our life, nothing produces so much bustle and excitement as a wedding. Death is too awful to be trifled with ; and, in these days of over-population, an addition to a family is rarely a subject for much rejoicing. But let notice of an expected marriage be intimated, and forthwith the whole house is on the *qui vive*. And no persons enter more fully into the delight of the occasion than do the old maiden branches of the family tree. Perhaps they think matrimony is infectious ; and that, having once made its appearance in a house, they stand a chance of taking it.

But however exhilarating the prospect of a marriage, the ceremony is, in itself, solemn

even to sadness ; the one in question was peculiarly so ; and, when Georgina, pale as the monumental stone near which she stood, and Perceval, with easy, manly grace, pronounced those awful words that linked them irrevocably together, tears of real sorrow, for they sprang from separating hearts, moistened the eyes of many of the spectators.

But it is over—the bells ring out a merry peal, Georgina has received her father's last embrace and parting blessing, friendly congratulations have been spoken, kind wishes breathed by those who stand within the church, and the more humble group, who line each side of the pathway, waiting impatiently to see “their dear young lady get into her own new carriage.” Perceval has handed in his bride, has taken his seat beside her, the drivers crack their whips, the horses eagerly spring forward, and they are off.

In the suburbs of the town of Marston, they dashed by a young man who had just issued from a mean looking house ; for an instant he raised his eyes towards the carriage — then hastily turned round, and, catching by the wooden palings, remained for a few moments as if incapable of moving. Georgina, blinded by her tears, saw neither Maurice, nor the look of withering agony that crossed his features as he recognised the wedding favours ; those tokens that the sacrifice of his young hopes had been completed. But Perceval perceived it all—and he hastily drew up the carriage window. Was it compassion for a defeated rival, or was it jealousy, that prompted him ? I fear the latter : for Perceval was vexed at Georgina's inordinate grief, and traced it to a deeper source than the mere natural sorrow every girl must feel on leaving home. But the impression was not lasting : his was not

a mind by nature prone to jealous feelings; as the day wore on, Georgina recovered her tranquillity, and D'Esterre forgot his transient suspicions.

For many reasons it had been arranged that the wedding breakfast should take place at Vine Cottage, under the superintendence of Miss Rocket: and thither, urged by Rebecca's hospitable kindness, Major Berrington proceeded with the other guests. He remained but a short time; it was too gay a scene for one like him; and, as he silently withdrew, no one followed; for they felt that to sorrow, such as his, solitude and self-communion would prove the most effectual balm. Later in the day, Mr. Beachcroft called at the Grange, and, softly entering the parlour, found Major Berrington seated in his accustomed chair, an open Bible lay before him, whose blistered pages shewed how fast and thick the bitter drops had

fallen. Ashamed of this evidence of weakness, he closed the book.

“Nay,” said the kind-hearted Rector, “do not let me interrupt you. You feel your daughter’s loss, as every parent must; and you do well and wisely thus to seek comfort where no one ever sought in vain. He, who compassionated a fainting multitude—who sorrowed for the friend he loved—wept over the rebellious city of his birth—whose life was one long act of love to man—still in his human nature, touched with a sense of our infirmities, and sympathising with our griefs, bids us in all our trials turn to Him for strength and consolation. But, my dear friend,” continued Mr. Beachcroft, after a brief pause and silent prayer, “you must not give too much rein to sorrow. Remember, that, in this instance, your grief is almost purely selfish.”

“It is, however, natural. Is it not a heart-

breaking thing to part with such a child as my Georgina?"

"Yes; your feelings are natural—perfectly natural; but they are not the less selfish for that: selfishness, in fact, is part of our nature—it meets us every-where; joy, sorrow, duty—all are tainted with self."

"And yet," replied Major Berrington, with a faltering voice, "it is not only on my own account I grieve: I cannot see my daughter's marriage in the same favourable point of view in which it appears to others, less anxious, and, therefore, less clear-sighted than I am."

Mr. Beachcroft looked inquiringly.

"Georgina," continued Major Berrington, in reply, "has made, what is called, a great match, and my vanity might be gratified, my pride elated, by my child's aggrandisement, could I but forget that unequal marriages are rarely happy."

“ I see no reason in the world why they should be otherwise. Of course, if a man marries very much beneath him—an uneducated servant, or a peasant girl, for instance—I can subscribe to that opinion : but where, as in this case, the difference consists merely in a few thousand pounds more, or of a degree or so of higher birth, I really cannot see why the union should prove otherwise than happy.”

“ Nor should I, if my son-in-law resembled Maurice Arnold. But there is, I fear, a want of heart about Mr. D’Esterre, which must militate against my poor child’s happiness.”

“ Till that is proved, do not suffer yourself to entertain the suspicion : in the first place, it may lead you to condemn unjustly ; in the next, cause you to imagine evil in a hundred instances, where, in reality, none exists. Rather commit your precious Georgina into the hands of Him who condescends to bid us call him

Father; and rest assured that He, who doeth all things well, will appoint to her the lot best suited to her highest welfare. And should that portion bear a darker hue; should Georgina's path in life be not exactly what you would have chosen for her; still, still remember that a full cup of earthly blessings is seldom meted out to those whom God most loves and cherishes; whose own, peculiar people are emphatically called 'Poor and afflicted.' Never, I pray you, let it escape your mind that it is not through joy, but sorrow—much tribulation, that we enter Heaven. And, therefore, do not suffer yourself to harbour gloomy thoughts: recollect that, as a course of uninterrupted prosperity hardens the heart, so the constant anxiety incident on poverty tends to corrode it. Georgina will, at any rate, be spared the last. But it is growing late: I shall be expected at home. Would nothing tempt you out this afternoon? We are quite alone, and

I need hardly say how joyfully my wife and daughter will welcome you to our fire-side."

Major Berrington declined the friendly invitation; and the worthy clergyman shortly after taking his departure, he was once more left to his own reflections: and sad enough they were; for, notwithstanding his naturally sanguine temper, the anxious father could not but perceive much cause to tremble for his daughter's happiness, thus married to a man who, whatever might have been his motives for seeking the connexion, had certainly shewn himself an exceedingly lukewarm admirer. More than once did Major Berrington feel tempted to regret that he had allowed the marriage to take place. Yet, had he interfered, and put an end to the engagement, what must have been the consequence to Georgina? What, her future fate? A life of penury—and sharp privation; for, the state of Maurice Arnold's health rendered his hope of independence

scarcely less empty than a dream. Yes, it was better as it was; the bitterness of want she would, at any rate, escape; and surely Perceval must learn to love and estimate a creature so gentle and attractive—so ready to love him.

Ere very long, he was joined by Charlotte Arnold, who came to dine and spend the evening at the Grange.

“You are a dear good girl,” said he, as they took their seats at the cheerless dinner table. “There are not many of your age who would thus leave a gay party for the society of a dispirited invalid.”

“I mean to do it frequently; I have promised Georgina that you shall never feel her loss.”

Major Berrington sighed; he loved Charlotte, he could appreciate all her excellences, he knew she would fulfil her promise; still, who could be to him what his own child had been?

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT Vine Cottage, meanwhile, all was light-hearted merriment. Rebecca, who never looked at any but the bright side, was in high spirits. The Miss Arnolds, with whom such gaieties were very unusual, sought to prolong their pleasures to the utmost, and though the breakfast had been concluded long ago, a fair proportion of the company yet remained, apparently with much enjoyment. Fortunes were told—riddles guessed at—puzzles explained—and would-be witticisms spoken.

That morning, on leaving the church, after the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, some little delay had occurred in regaining the carriages; and, as the wedding party stood in detached groups, a young man, apparently three or four-and-twenty years of age, dark, tall, and rather stoutly built, dressed in a very *outré* style of fancied fashion—not absolutely ill-looking, but most vulgarly coxcombical, walked up to the spot where some of the Miss Arnolds, in blue and pink bonnets, were standing together. A cry of delighted surprise, on the part of Belinda, was the result of his appearance.

“Mr. Pratt!” almost screamed the enchanted damsel, “is it possible I behold you?”

“Even so,” he answered.

“And what brings you to Atherley?”

“A loving disposition, fairest lady,” replied the swain, laying his hand theatrically on his heart.

“Hush, hush—you must not talk of love.”

“Not talk of love? oh, say not so. Love is my life—the very thread of my existence hangs on love.”

“Who can that be?” said Charlotte to Miss Rocket, who turned round quickly, and, having recognised her old acquaintance, greeted him with a bow and look which would have awed a less determined person, and offended one more sensitive. But Mr. Gustavus Pratt was not a modest young gentleman, neither was he easily affronted; all Miss Rocket’s artillery, therefore, produced but the effect of causing him to moderate his manner, and lower the tone of voice with which he informed the entranced Belinda that, though business had been the ostensible reason of his appearance in that neighbourhood, she was the real attraction.

An invitation to the breakfast was speedily given by the fascinated fair one; and, despite

Charlotte's gravity, and Rebecca's frowns, Mr. Gustavus Pratt was quite the *beau* of the afternoon ; all the other gentlemen were completely distanced, or eclipsed by him. As might be expected, both bride and bridegroom were severely canvassed.

"Don't you think it a great pity Mrs. D'Esterre cried so much this morning? do brides always cry?" enquired Miss Lucas, a young lady of no superior understanding—and one of Belinda's occasional favourites.

"Bridesmaids do," answered Mr. Pratt. Then added, looking at Belinda, "because their turn is not yet come."

"Have done, you saucy creature," cried she ; trying hard to conjure up a blush.

"I wouldn't be married for the whole world," observed Miss Lucas, "I love my liberty too well."

"And so do I," rejoined Belinda, casting down her eyes.

“ That ’s a very lucky circumstance, for, most likely, no one will ever ask you. There are not many gentlemen like Perceval D’Esterre, who can afford to marry girls without money ; nor, indeed, many girls who, like Georgina, have beauty enough to make up for their want of fortune ;” said Miss Rocket, in the hope of frightening off Mr. Pratt.

“ Yes,” said Miss Lucas, “ people think Mrs. D’Esterre very handsome, but I ’m sure she didn’t look well this morning. It ’s a great pity she *would* cry so much ; for, you know, crying makes the eyes red, and red eyes are so unbecoming.”

“ All violent emotions are unbecoming,” replied Gustavus. “ Pride inflates the nostrils, anger swells the lip, tears make the eyes red, and fear takes the hair out of curl.”

“ What does *love* do ?” enquired Belinda, tenderly.

“ Love makes a woman lovely, to be sure.”

“ How can you talk so ? I declare I will not listen to you any longer. I shall go and watch the sun-set from my favourite window.”

“ Happy window !” murmured Gustavus, “ to be so distinguished. But, suffer me to follow you.”

“ No, no, you shan’t indeed. The moon will speedily be rising, and I always choose to gaze upon her chastened splendours, pensive and alone. Gustavus, do you love the moon ?”

“ Far above every object upon earth but one.”

“ I did not know before, the moon was in the habit of coming down upon the earth,” testily remarked Miss Rocket. Then, as if the case was hopeless, turned to another guest.

Belinda placed herself in the window, while Mr. Pratt remained standing near Miss Lucas.

“ Charming house, this, ma’am,” said he.

The lady did not contradict him ; indeed, she could not but agree.

“ I suppose, part of the late Mr. Arnold’s property?”

“ No; Mrs. Arnold bought it after her husband’s death. She got it quite a bargain. Mr. Arnold resided at the Rectory.”

(“ A clergyman ;” thought Pratt; “ not much money then, I fear.”)

“ Is it long since that gentleman’s death?”

“ Yes; many years. Mrs. Arnold did not long survive him.”

“ She was, I believe, a lady of fortune—at least, I think I have heard so?” said Mr. Pratt, by way of feeler.

“ Not much; I believe five or six thousand pounds.”

“ Oh—I was led to think there had been more, by a remark I once heard respecting one of the young ladies, I forget which—who was reported to be an heiress.” This was another feeler. He had heard nothing of the kind, nor

had he any ground for the assertion, excepting a sort of boast, Belinda had one day made, that she was better off than either of her sisters.

“An heiress!” said Miss Lucas, laughing. “Oh dear no; by no means. They have, of course, their mother’s fortune in addition to whatever Mr. Arnold may have left; but that could not be much; he only had the living for a short time. Miss Rocket, too, will probably leave whatever she may have between her nieces; and one of them, Belinda, the young lady who was here just now, is god-child to two old ladies in this neighbourhood, one of whom, dying last year, left her one thousand pounds, and it is supposed the other will do the same. But there is nothing like fortune.”

“Mary, are you ready? I am going now,” said a little old lady, in a grey silk gown.

“Yes, mama, quite. Good afternoon.”

Mr. Pratt returned Miss Lucas’s parting

salutation; and, after casting up in his mind the probable amount of Belinda's wealth, present and future, he joined her in the window, and began expatiating on the delights of moonlight rambles, a subject into which his Dulcinea entered *con amore*.

Miss Flagge was, however, the only person who walked by moonlight that evening: she had lingered behind the other guests, and then engaged in a rather warm discussion with Rebecca, on their usual topic of dispute; a subject which arose, not unnaturally, out of the event they had met to celebrate. Notwithstanding Miss Rocket's delight and exultation at Georgina's happy prospects, she inveighed quite as much as formerly against marriage in the abstract; for Mr. Pratt's sudden appearance and bold bearing had greatly excited her indignation, and she argued so long and earnestly that the village clock struck seven,

as Theresa, cloaked and galoched, shivering with cold and almost shrunk up into nothing, stood waiting at the private door of Mrs. Slopewell's dwelling, until the servant girl judged it convenient to hear the small, tinkling bell her frozen fingers scarcely found energy to pull. And when she entered her little sitting room, the sharp, cold moonbeams fell in a narrow stream of light on the tawdry carpet, giving an air of chill discomfort, that a smoking, recently kindled, and but scantily supplied fire tended rather to increase.

She hastily closed the window curtains (there were no shutters), and having, in the true spirit of economy, exchanged her lilac silk dress and bonnet for a dark merino gown and net cap, endeavoured to infuse some warmth into her frame, by dint of that (to the poor) almost elixir of life—Tea. And while she sat before the little tea-tray, trying to make herself

believe that the black liquid she was drinking, and which cost three shillings and eightpence per pound, was quite equal in quality to that she had hitherto used, and purchased at five, it was not surely very strange that a somewhat active imagination should draw a parallel between her loneliness and discomfort, and the luxury and every other source of happiness by which Georgina was at that moment probably surrounded. And then, Theresa's fancy pitched upon a humbler theme, to wit—a certain Mr. Parkins—a brewer in the neighbouring town, who some years previously, smitten with her charms, had made an offer of his hand and heart. But being guilty of a red face and clumsy person, a brown wig and a business, which, however lucrative, was not considered quite genteel, proved unsuccessful in his suit. He had married shortly after, had prospered exceedingly, and now occupied a large house,

with gardens, green-house, hot-house—bearing the name of Shrubbery Hall, as if there had never before been a house surrounded with ever-greens, lilacs and laburnums. More than once also, as Theresa, weary and on foot, plodded along the turnpike-road, she had been all but mud-bespattered from the wheels of the flashy light green chariot, in which Mrs. Parkins was wont to take the air.

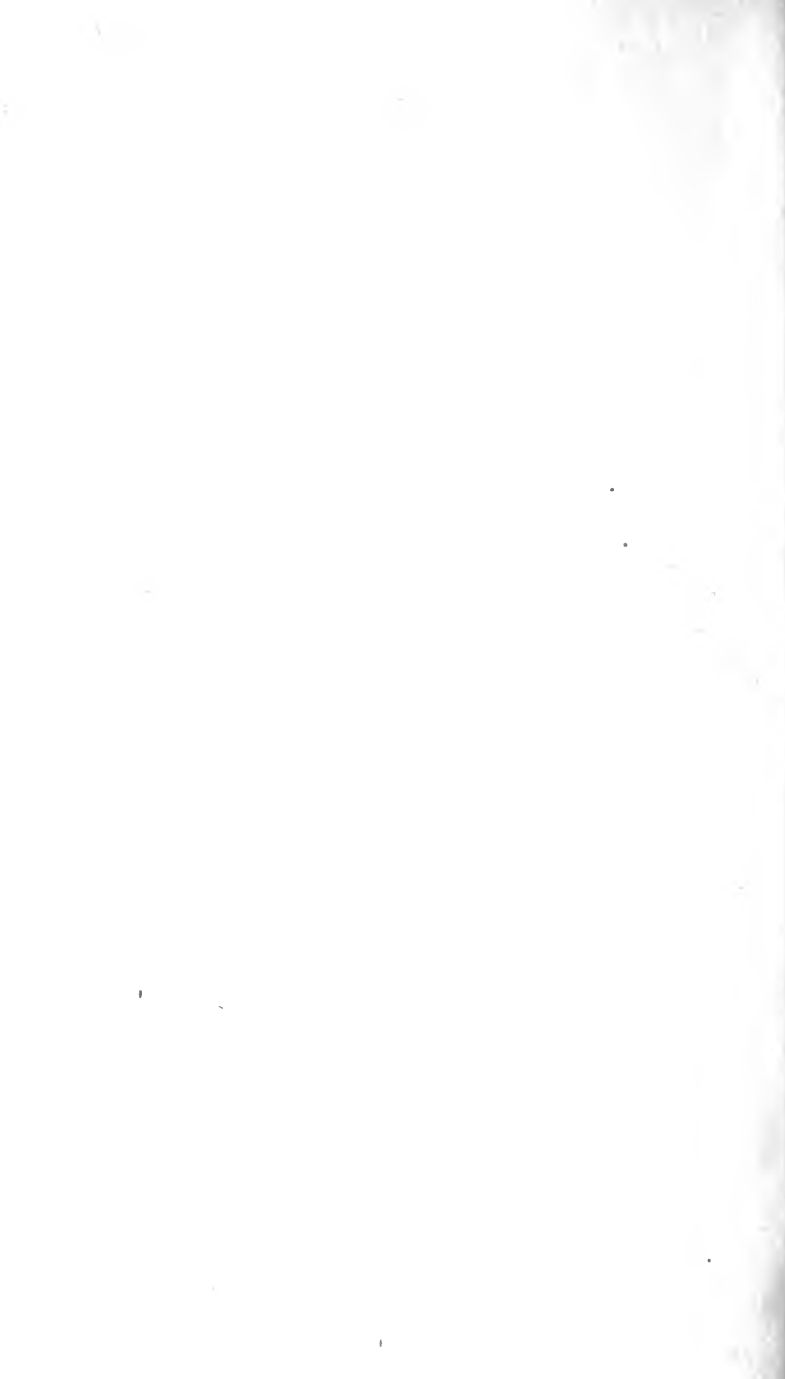
Perhaps unfortunately for herself, Theresa had been educated above her sphere in life, and hitherto, the refinement of feeling, education usually bestows, had rendered her tolerably indifferent to the glories she had forfeited ; or, if a spirit of regret did sometimes rise, the recollection of Mr. Parkins's appearance, his loud voice, and coarse, boisterous manners, speedily turned the scale. But it was no longer so ; she was so *very* cold—so thoroughly uncomfortable, that she most heartily wished it

had been possible to change her wretched little drawing-room over Mrs. Slopewell's shop, for the warm, comfortable rooms of Shrubbery Hall.

It is a very great mistake to limit the suffering penury entails, simply, to the lower orders. Major Berrington, parting with his precious treasure in defiance of his better judgment—Maurice Arnold, borne down at once with disappointment and disease, and yet obliged to struggle on—even Theresa—*starved* into the surrender of her finer sensibilities—felt all the stings and bitterness of poverty quite as acutely as does the labouring man, who may sometimes, perchance, go supperless to bed. And perhaps more; for theirs were trials of the heart and feelings—his, but a bodily privation.

END OF VOL. I.

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